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# The DEAD KEEP FAITH





**LOOK!**

THESE  
TWO  
TERRIFIC  
ISSUES

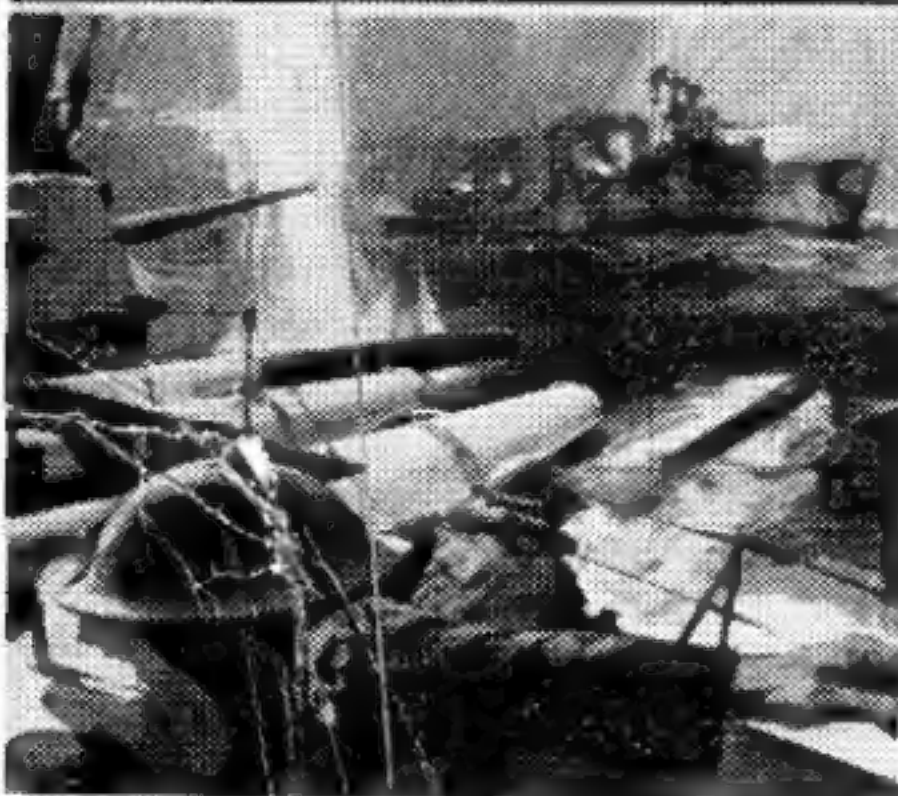
NOW  
ON  
SALE



The **LONG  
HAUL**



**ENGAGE the  
ENEMY**



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# THE DEAD KEEP FAITH

**E**ARLY 1940 WAS THE PERIOD OF THE 'PHONEY WAR' WHEN THE ARMIES OF EUROPE FACED EACH OTHER ACROSS THE SUPPOSEDLY IMPREGNABLE MAGINOT AND SIEGFRIED LINES. IT WAS THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM . . .



IT WAS A TIME OF WAITING, OF BOREDOM AND EVEN OF DISAPPOINTMENT, FOR MEN WHO HUNGRED FOR ACTION WERE NOT HAPPY JUST SITTING AROUND . . .

# Chapter 1. *Shoot on Sight*

AMONG THE UNITS GUARDING THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF FRANCE WERE THE 3RD BARNSHIRES, A TOUGH INFANTRY BATTALION WHO WANTED TO GET THE WAR OVER FAST.



SECOND-LIEUTENANT MARKIN HATED THE DREARY WAITING AS MUCH AS SERGEANT ROBERTS.



A SPARK OF HOPE FLICKERED IN THE SERGEANT'S EYES AS HE SALUTED AND TURNED AWAY.





MARKIN AND CAPTAIN JOHN ROSS WERE OLD FRIENDS BUT EVEN SO, THE 'B' COMPANY COMMANDER WAS NOT OVER EAGER TO AUTHORISE THE PATROL.

VERY WELL, SAM... LEAVE AFTER DARK AND BE BACK BEFORE DAWN. YOU'LL BE TAKING SERGEANT ROBERTS' PLATOON, I SUPPOSE?

I DON'T THINK HE'D LET ME LEAVE WITHOUT HIM... HE'S A REGULAR FIRE-EATER!

LATER THAT NIGHT, A GHOSTLY FILE OF MEN SNAKED THEIR WAY OVER THE SNOW TOWARDS THE ENEMY LINES.

NO NOISE BACK THERE!  
I'LL CLOBBER ANYONE  
MAKING A SOUND!

NERVES TENSE, EYES NARROWED AGAINST THE HALF-LIGHT OF THE WINTRY NIGHT, THE PATROL GLIDED TOWARDS THE ENEMY/

WE'LL SWING TO THE NORTH  
AND THEN CUT DOWN INTO THE  
JERRY LINES. THEY'RE  
SUPPOSED TO BE THIN  
ON THE GROUND  
THERE.



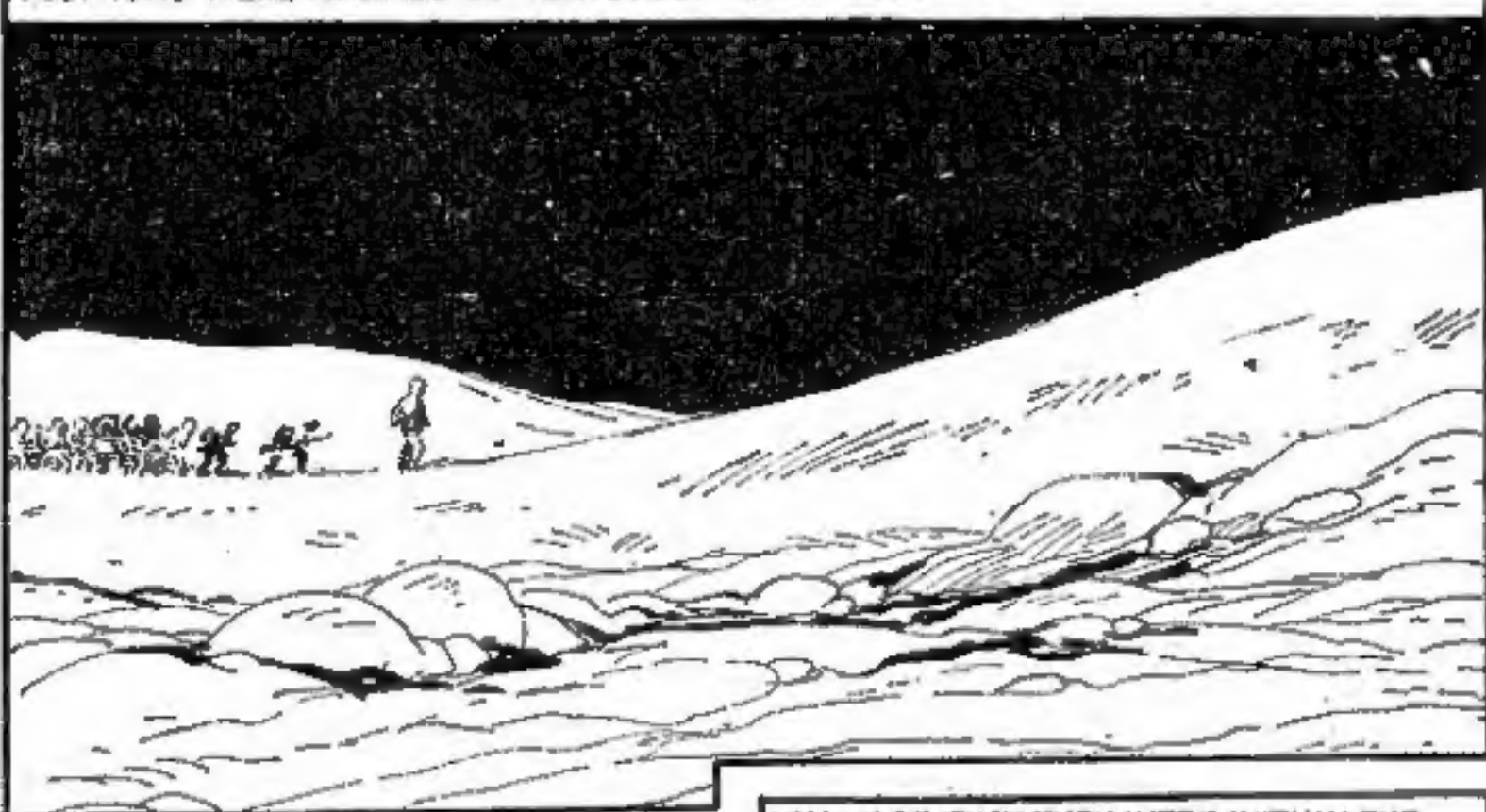
BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A GERMAN OFFICER WAS ARRANGING THE DETAILS OF A REVISED GUARD ...

ACHTUNG! THE GUARD WILL BE  
EXTENDED BEYOND THE PRESENT  
LINES. THEY WILL SHOOT, WITHOUT  
QUESTION, ANYTHING SEEN BEYOND  
THAT POINT.

JAWOHL, HERR  
LEUTNANT!



BY THE TIME MARKIN CHANGED DIRECTION TOWARDS THE ENEMY, THE NEW GUARD POSITIONS WERE MANNED BY NERVOUSLY ALERT MEN.



ONE OF THE GERMANS, SHIVERING IN HIS SLIT-TRENCH, SUDDENLY STIFFENED AS SOMETHING CAUGHT HIS EYE . . .

HIMMEL! WAS THAT A MOVEMENT . . . OR AM I SEEING THINGS? IF IT MOVES AGAIN . . .



UNAWARE THAT THEY WERE WITHIN THE ENEMY'S SIGHT, THE PATROL CROPT FORWARD . . . AND A RIFLE CRACKED SUDDENLY. A MAN'S CRY OF PAIN WAS INSTANTLY STIFLED BY A CALLOUSED PALM.

BLAZES! DON'T MOVE! IF WE RUN THEY'LL CUT US DOWN!





THE BRITISH PATROL WERE CAUGHT ON A BARE SLOPE. GENTLY, MARKIN EASED HIMSELF FORWARD

HOW IS HE,  
SERGEANT?

DEAD, SIR! THE SAME AS  
WE'LL ALL BE UNLESS WE  
CAN GET THAT BLOKE WITH  
THE RIFLE . . . AND HIS  
MATES, IF ANY!

GRIMLY, MARKIN GLANCED UP AT THE SKY. CLOUDS WERE BEGINNING TO BLOT OUT THE STARS AND SOON, WHAT LITTLE LIGHT THERE WAS, WOULD BE GONE.

LUCK MAY BE WITH US,  
SERGEANT. IT'LL BE PITCH DARK  
IN A FEW MINUTES. THEN WE'LL  
TAKE CARE OF WHAT'S AHEAD.

WHILE THE PATROL CROUCHED MOTIONLESS IN THE SNOW, THE GERMAN GUARD WAS BEING BERATED FOR CAUSING A FALSE ALARM.

I SAW  
SOMETHING  
MOVE!  
I SWEAR IT!

DUMKOPF!  
IT WAS NOTHING!  
GET BACK TO  
YOUR POST!



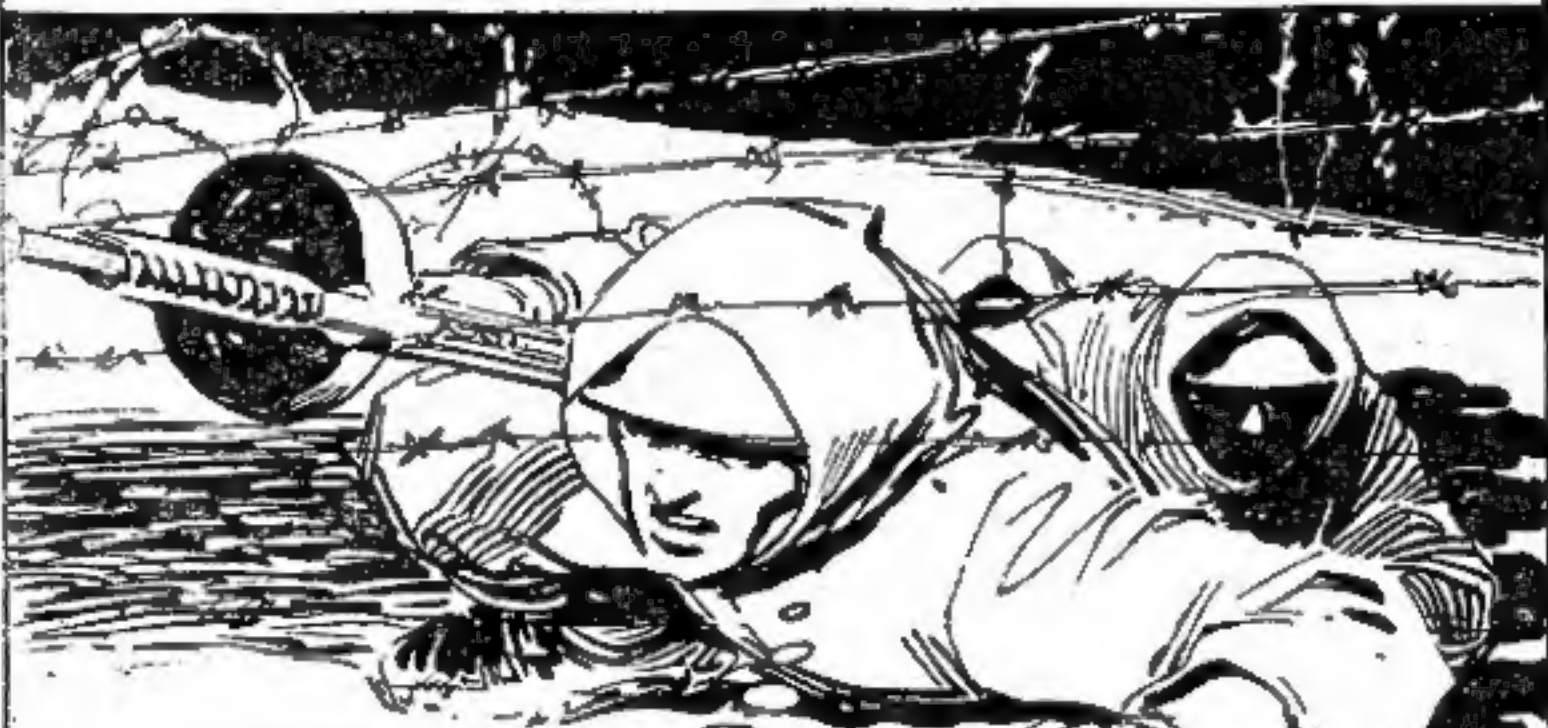
ONCE AGAIN THE SHADOWS MOVED. BUT THIS TIME THE GUARD SAW NOTHING



ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE ENEMY SENTRIES WERE LOCATED . . . AND SILENCED.



ONCE AGAIN, MARKIN AND HIS PATROL MOVED ON . . . AND BEGAN TO NEGOTIATE THE BARBED WIRE THEY FOUND IN THEIR PATH. THE LIEUTENANT FROWNED . . .



JERRY'S DEFINITELY CHANGED HIS DEFENCE LINE. I WONDER IF THEY ARE TRYING TO HIDE SOMETHING?

MINUTES LATER, HE FOUND THE ANSWER. A GREAT CONCENTRATION OF ARMOUR, GUNS AND MOTORISED INFANTRY. THE WEHRMACHT WAS READY TO MOVE . . .



GOOD GRIEF!  
WITH THAT LOT THEY COULD  
CUT OUR DEFENCE LINE TO RIBBONS!  
WE'VE GOT TO GET THIS INFORMATION  
BACK AT ALL COSTS!



MEANWHILE, THE STILL, GREY-CLAD SHAPES Huddled in the snow had been found by a shocked enemy guard commander . . . and reported to his officer.

TEUFEL! AN ENGLANDER  
PATROL MUST HAVE DONE THIS!  
SEAL THE AREA . . . THEY MUST  
BE CAUGHT . . . OR ELIMINATED!



VERY GOOD,  
HERA LEUTNANT!

IT DID NOT TAKE LONG FOR THE ALERTED ENEMY TO FIND THE INTRUDERS. GUNS HAMMERED AND LEAD SEARED THE NIGHT AS THE PURSUIT WAS TAKEN UP.

GET THE MEN SPREAD OUT,  
SERGEANT . . . BUT GO LIKE BLAZES  
FOR THE WIRE. IT'S OUR ONLY  
CHANCE.



RIGHT, SIR!

DESPERATE NOW, THE PATROL RACED THROUGH THE SNOW, PAUSING ONLY TO ANSWER THE GERMAN FIRE. INEVITABLY THERE WERE CASUALTIES.



THERE WAS NO TIME TO TEND THE WOUNDED. MARKIN, FIRING AS HE RAN, HAD THOUGHTS ONLY OF WHAT HE HAD SEEN.





LEAVING A TRAIL OF FALLEN MEN IN THEIR WAKE THEY RAN . . . TURNED TO FIGHT BACK . . . AND RAN AGAIN.



SOMEHOW, THEY FORCED A PATH THROUGH THE ENEMY WIRE AND WERE ABLE TO SLIP THE HUNTERS IN THE DARKNESS. AS DAWN BROKE, THEY LIMPED WEARILY 'B' COMPANY LINES

TAKE CARE OF THE MEN, SERGEANT, AND LOOK AFTER YOURSELF TOO. I MUST MAKE MY REPORT AT ONCE.

VERY GOOD, SIR. IT WAS A RIGHT STICKY DO, WASN'T IT?



CAPTAIN ROSS LISTENED TO MARKIN'S EXCITED REPORT WITH OPEN SCEPTICISM.

BUT OUR RECCE PLANES WOULD HAVE SPOTTED SUCH A CONCENTRATION

THEY WERE CAMOUFLAGED AND HARD TO SEE FROM THE AIR. MY BET IS THAT JERRY'S PREPARING FOR SOMETHING BIG.

DISMISSING THE YOUNG OFFICER, ROSS BIT HIS LIPS WITH INDECISION . . .

I'D LOOK A FOOL IF SAM'S WRONG. BUT I'LL BE IN WORSE TROUBLE IF I DON'T REPORT WHAT HE CLAIMS HE SAW.

AT S.H.Q. A STEELY-EYED GENERAL READ ROSS' CAUTIOUS REPORT AND SNORTED WITH IMPATIENCE.

HANG IT! ROSS IS ALWAYS SO INDEFINITE. ONE OF HIS JUNIOR OFFICERS 'CLAIMS' TO HAVE SPOTTED HEAVY CONCENTRATIONS OF JERRY ARMOUR. BETTER SEND A RECCE PLANE OVER TO HAVE A LOOK . . .



BAD WEATHER GROUNDED THE LYSANDERS DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND WHEN THEIR REPORT FINALLY REACHED CAPTAIN ROSS, IT THREW HIM INTO A COLD RAGE.

YOU'VE MADE ME LOOK  
AN IDIOT, SAM. LOOK AT THIS,  
AIR-OBSERVATION REPORTS  
NO SIGN OF YOUR  
JERRY ARMOUR!

THEN THEY  
MUST HAVE MOVED  
IT! I STILL SAY  
I DEFINITELY  
SAW IT... IN MY  
OPINION, JERRY'S  
UP TO  
SOMETHING  
BIG.

LIEUTENANT MARKIN WAS RIGHT! AS THE SNOW THAWED, THE GERMANS LAUNCHED THEIR BLITZKRIEG . . . THE LIGHTNING WAR . . . AND THEIR PENETRATION POINT OF THE ALLIED LINE WAS NEUTRAL BELGIUM.

AAARGH!

THE PANZERS WERE ROLLING RUTHLESSLY OVER MEAGRE OPPOSITION, THE LUFTWAFFE WAS POUNDING ISOLATED POCKETS OF RESISTANCE INTO THE SLUSH



AGAINST SUCH OVERWHELMING ODDS, THE BELGIANS WERE FORCED INTO BITTER SURRENDER TO AVOID USELESS SLAUGHTER. THE BRITISH ARMY WAS LEFT TO FIGHT FOR ITS VERY EXISTENCE



## Chapter 2. *Escape to Dunkirk*

THERE WAS CONFUSION . . . AND ALARM . . . AT COMPANY H.Q. AS THE REPORTS CAME POURING IN. CAPTAIN ROSS, SWEAT STREAMING FROM HIS FACE, NERVOUSLY SNAPPED AT THOSE ABOUT HIM.

JENKINS! CHECK THAT ALL VEHICLES ARE READY FOR IMMEDIATE DESTRUCTION IN CASE WE HAVE TO PULL OUT. SIGNALLER . . . WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU DOING? HAVEN'T YOU CONTACTED H.Q. YET?

STILL TRYING, SIR.

WITHOUT DIRECT ORDERS FROM HIGHER COMMAND, ROSS WAS AT A LOSS, FOR HE LACKED THE ABILITY TO IMPROVISE IN THE FACE OF THE DISASTER THAT THREATENED THEM.

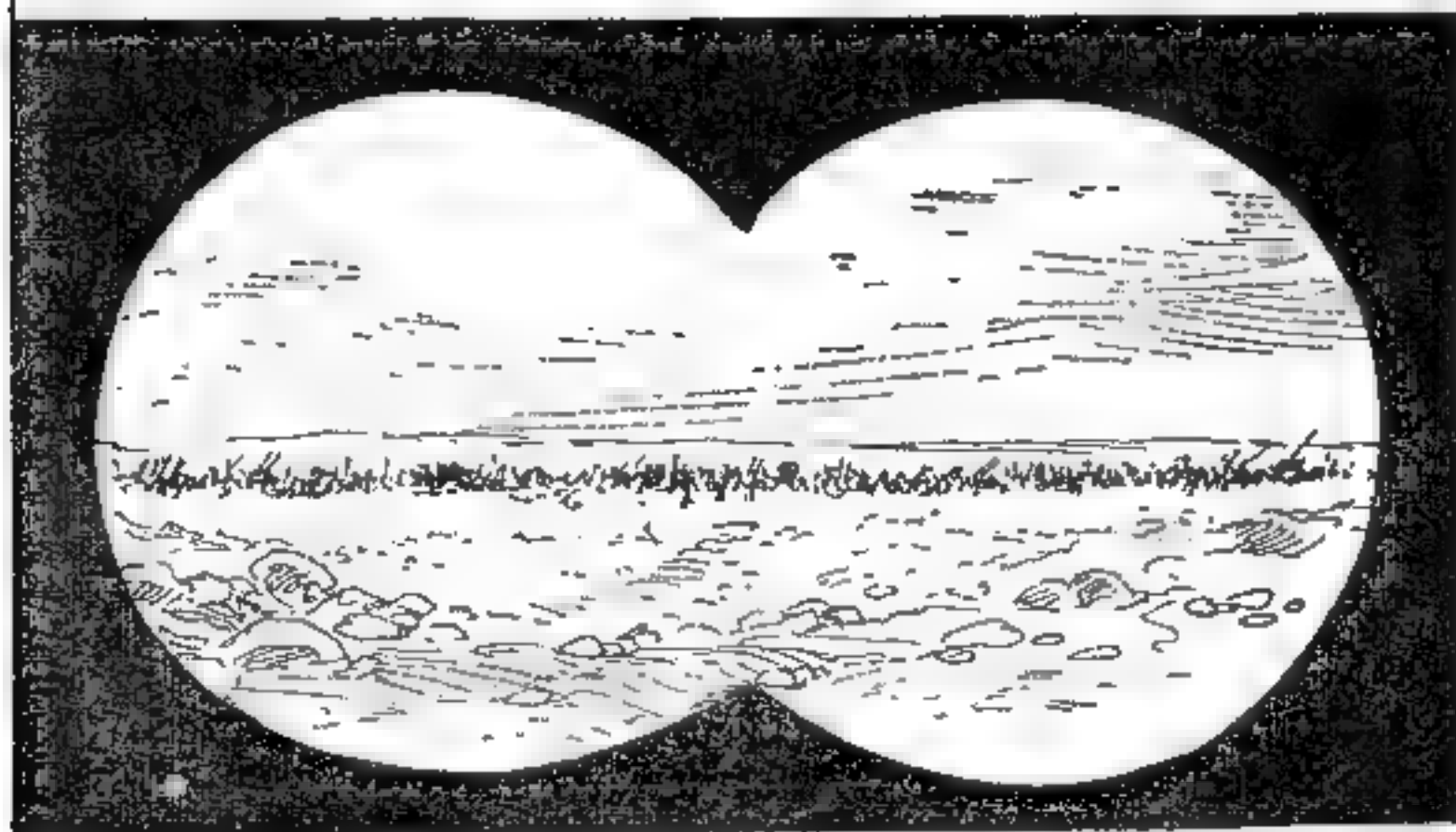
WHAT MORE CAN I DO?  
IF ONLY H.Q. WOULD SEND  
DEFINITE ORDERS.



TO THE MEN FACING THE ENEMY, THEIR DUTY WAS SIMPLE. THEY MUST FIGHT... AND THEY DID NOT SHRINK FROM THAT GRIM PROSPECT



WHAT MARKIN COULD SEE WAS ENOUGH TO CHILL THE BLOOD OF THE HARDEST VETERAN. A MASSIVE FORCE OF MEN AND ARMOUR WAS MOVING INEXORABLY TOWARDS THE BRITISH POSITIONS



TIGHT-LIPPED, MARKIN LOWERED HIS GLASSES AS THE SNARL OF A MOTOR-CYCLE BROKE INTO HIS SOMBRE THOUGHTS.

DISPATCH  
FOR YOU, SIR!



SURPRISE WIDENED MARKIN'S EYES AS HE READ THE DISPATCH



All vehicles to be  
destroyed. Unit to take  
position on Hill 45  
immediately and hold  
on at all costs.  
Enemy to be engaged  
on sight.

MUSCLES KNOTTED AND WRITHED ALONG MARKIN'S JAW. THE ORDER WAS RIDICULOUS! THEIR PRESENT POSITION WAS AS SOUND AS COULD BE FOUND.

ANY REPLY,  
SIR?

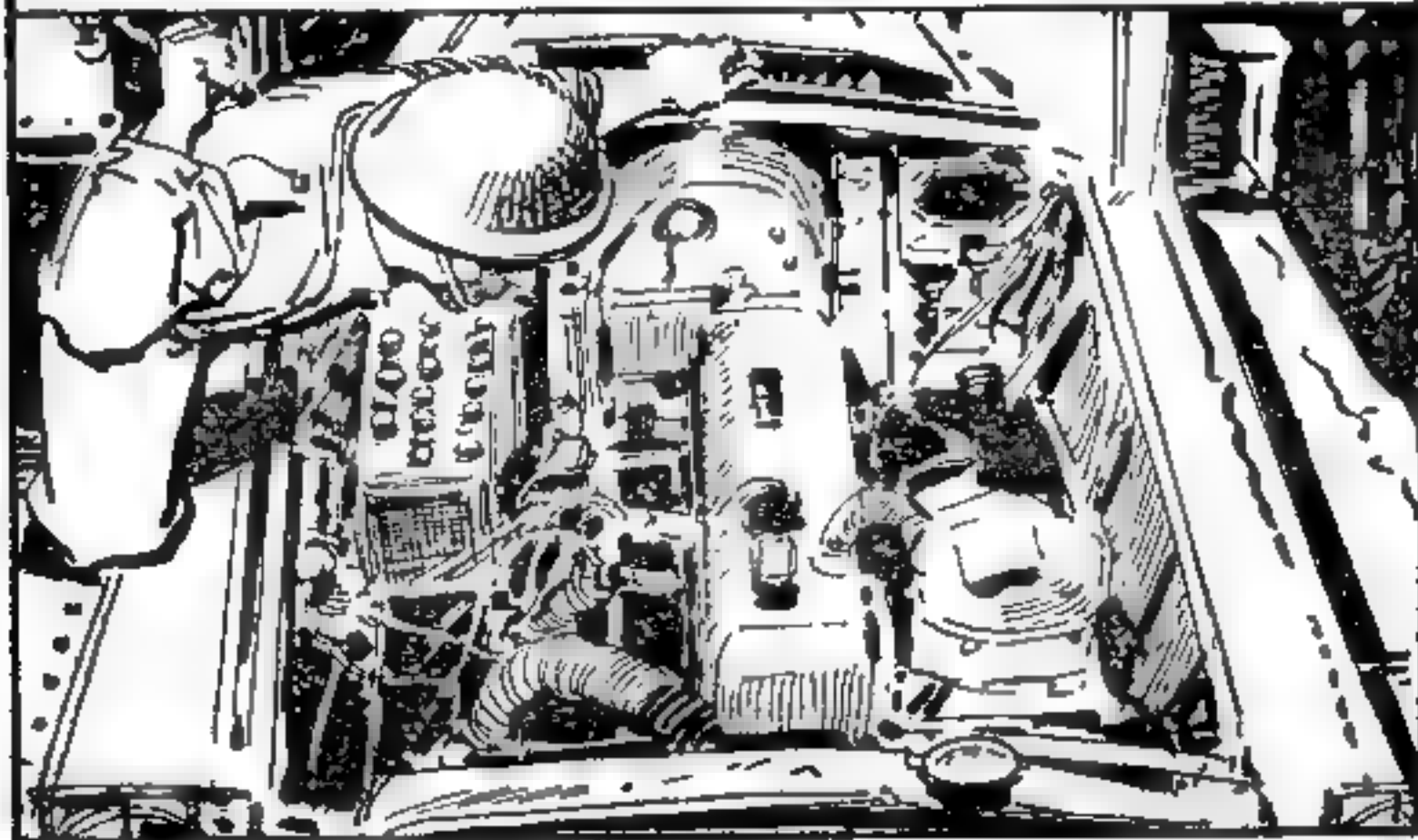


NO! THAT WILL  
BE ALL.

ANGRILY, HE FLUNG THE DISPATCH ASIDE AND GAVE THE NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS



SAVAGE BLOWS OF HAMMERS RUINED EVERY VEHICLE'S ENGINE BEYOND REPAIR.





HILL 45 WAS A PROMINENT POSITION DEVOID OF NATURAL COVER. THERE, THE PLATOON FRANTICALLY DUG THEMSELVES IN

FASTER... DIG FASTER  
AND AS DEEP AS YOU CAN. A HOLE'S  
YOUR BEST FRIEND WHEN THE  
BULLETS START FLYING!

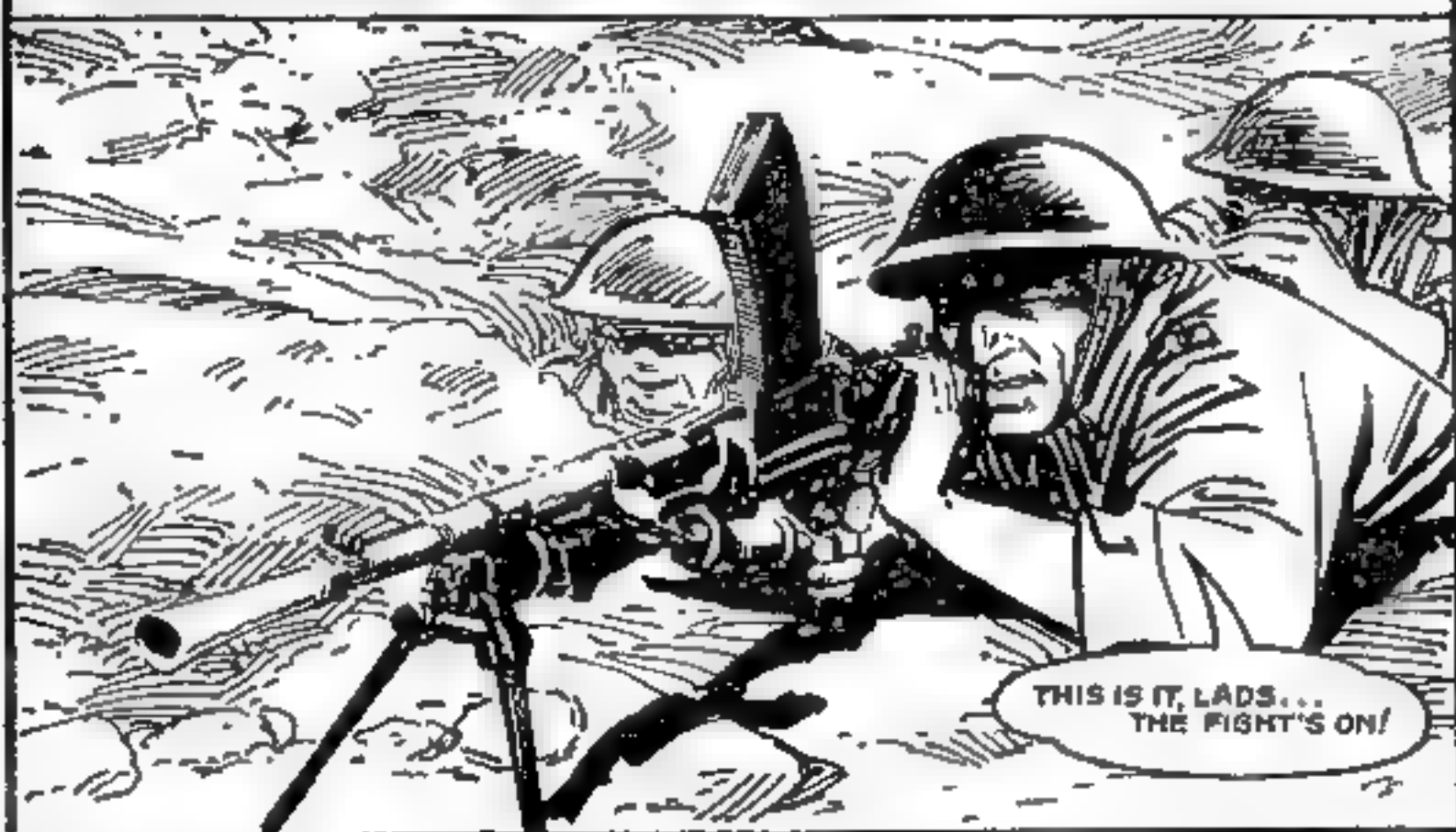


EVEN AS SERGEANT ROBERTS SPOKE, KEEN GERMAN EYES WERE STUDYING THE HILL FROM A TANK TURRET. A RASPED ORDER SWUNG THE LONG-BARRELLED GUN AROUND...

FEUER!



THE ENEMY'S FIRST SHOT FELL SHORT AND BEFORE THE GUNNER COULD CORRECT HIS AIM, MARKIN FLUNG HIMSELF BEHIND A BREN GUN



A SHORT, ACCURATE BURST FROM THE BREN CRUMPLED THE ENEMY TANK COMMANDER IN HIS TURRET AND A RAGGED CHEER ROSE FROM THE BRITISH RANKS.



NOW THE BATTLE WAS JOINED AND THE HILLSIDE WAS SWEEPED BY A HURRICANE OF CANNON AND MACHINE-GUN FIRE.

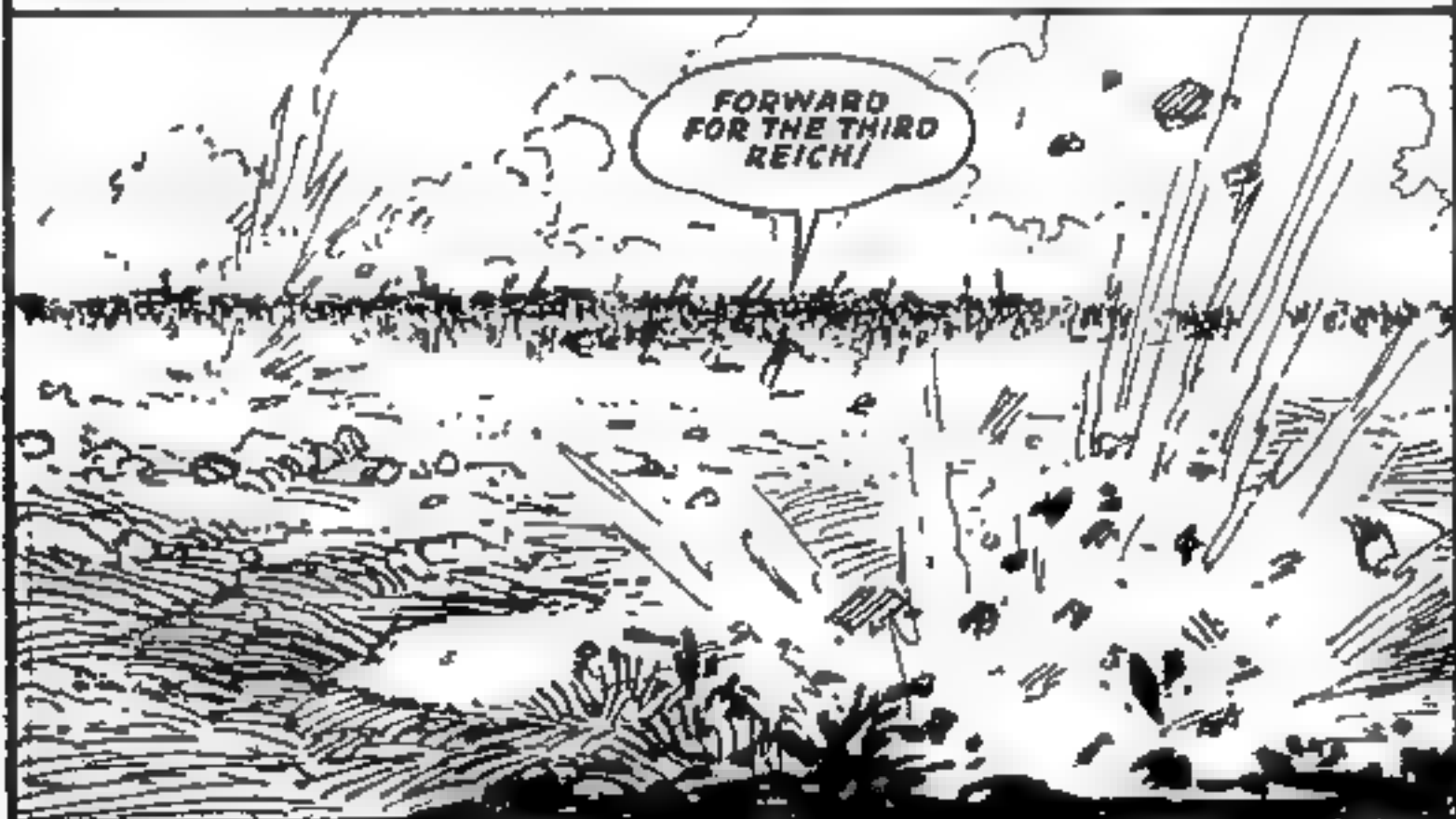


CROUCHING BENEATH THE BARRAGE, LIEUTENANT SAM MARKIM AND HIS MEN WAITED FOR THE ATTACK THEY KNEW WOULD COME WHEN IT LIFTED.





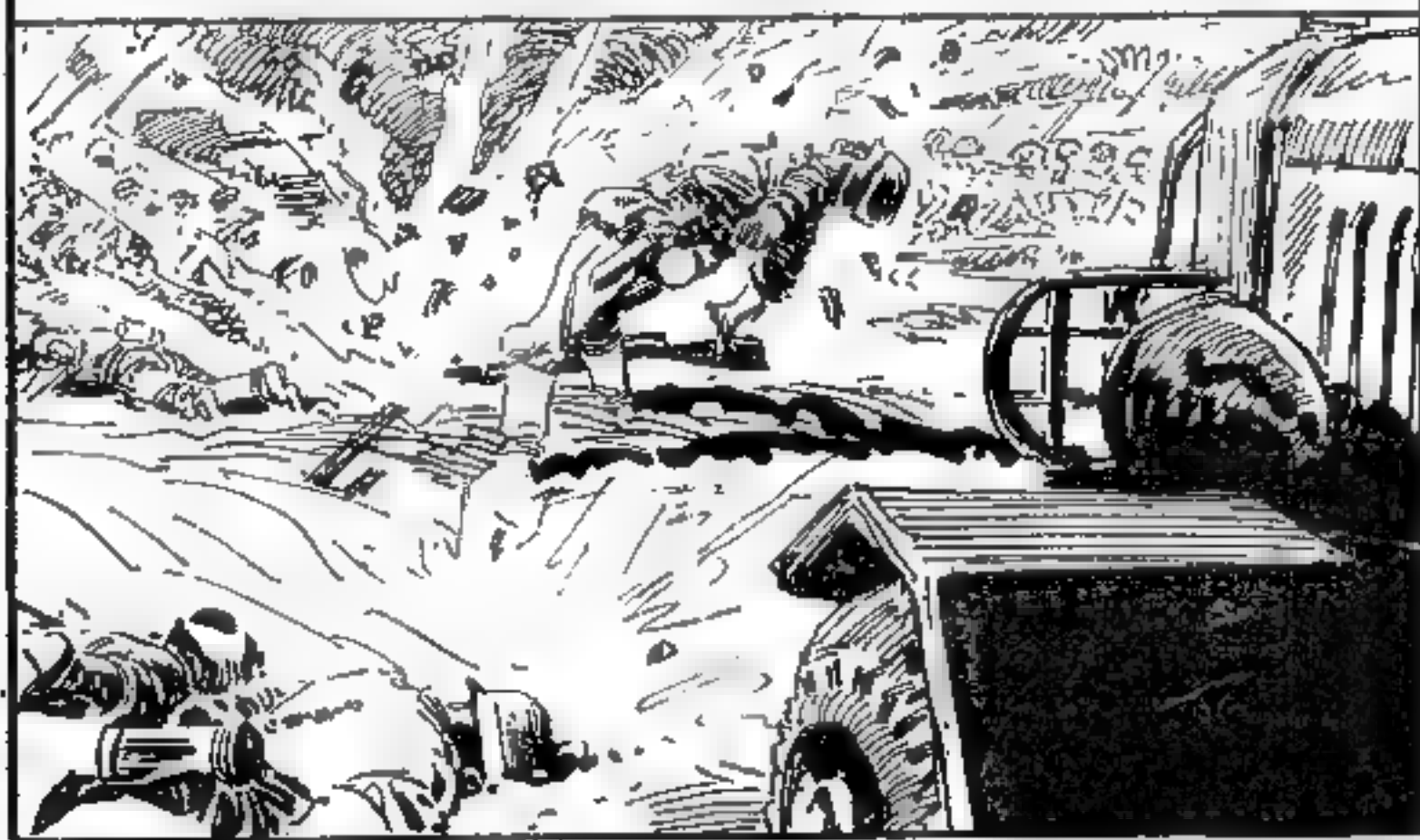
A GREY WAVE OF GERMAN INFANTRY BEGAN TO STORM UP THE SHELL-POCKED SLOPES OF THE HILL . . . CONFIDENT THAT THE FEEBLE OPPOSITION HAD BEEN BATTERED INTO SUBMISSION



BUT THEY STOMPED ARROGANTLY INTO THE AGGRESSIVE FURY OF THE BRITISH GUNS.



AGAIN AND AGAIN, THE NAZI OFFICERS FLUNG THEIR MEN UP THAT FIRE-DRENCHED HILLSIDE WHERE THE CLOSE SUPPORT OF MORTARS WAS TEARING GREAT GAPS IN THE BRITISH LINE.



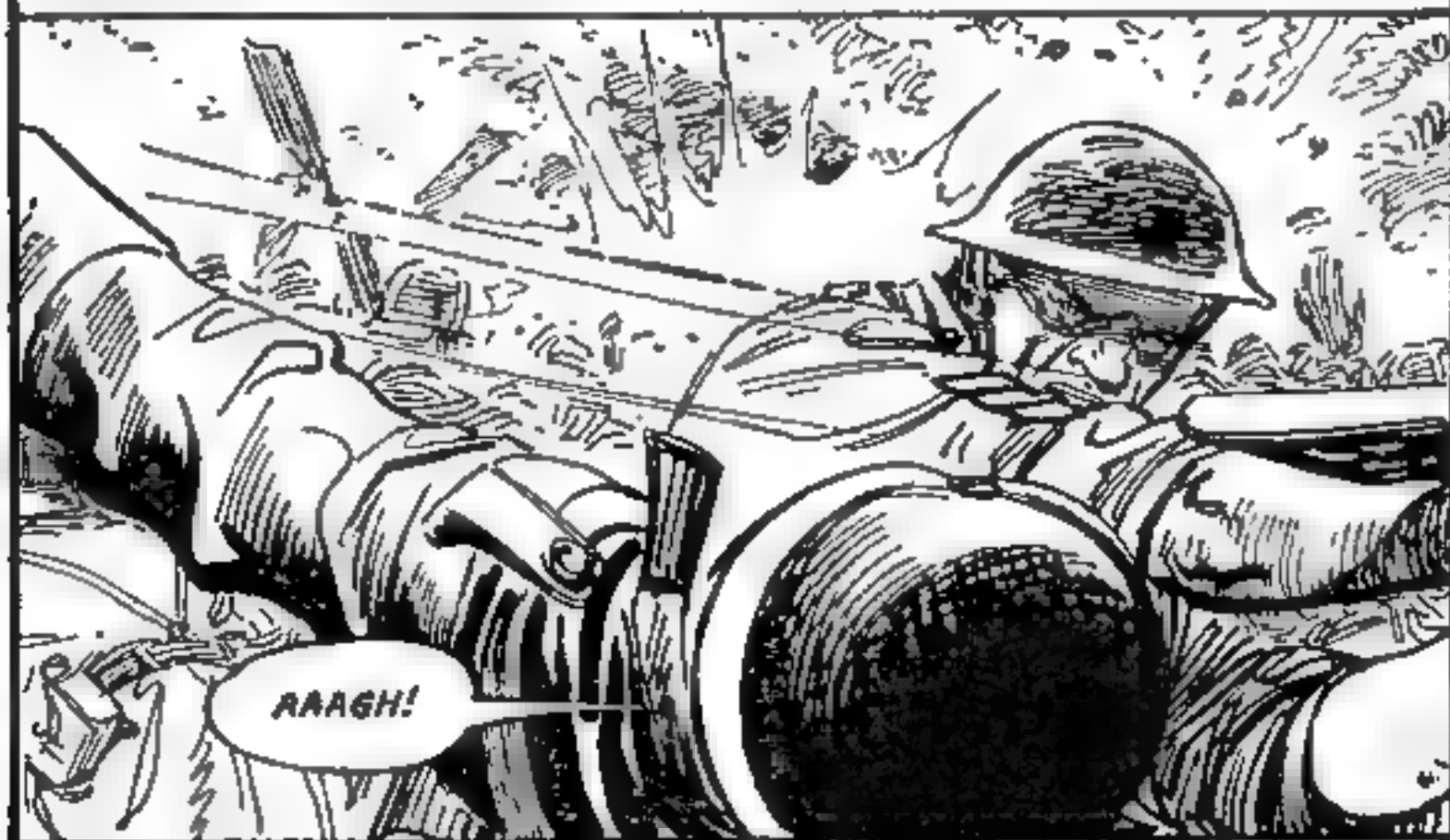
IT BECAME A CONFUSION OF NOISE AND VIOLENCE AS BOTH SIDES MET IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.



FIGHTING WITH THE SKILL OF THE VETERAN, SERGEANT ROBERTS WAS WIELDING HIS RIFLE AND BAYONET TO TERRIBLE EFFECT.



INSTINCTIVELY, ROBERTS DUCKED, THEN STRAIGHTENED, THE BUTT OF HIS RIFLE SMASHING THE SNARL FROM A GERMAN MOUTH





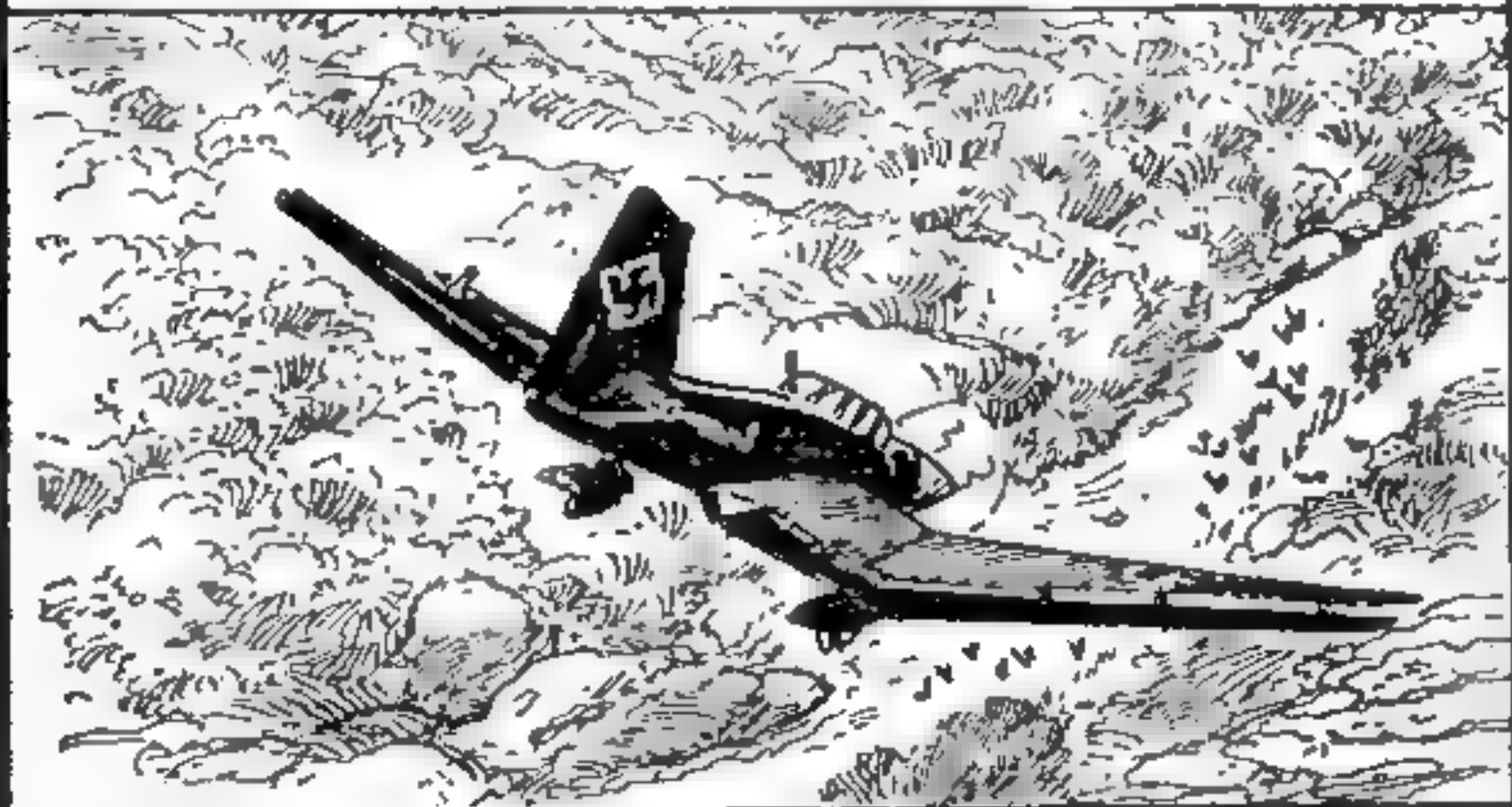
SUDDENLY, THE ENEMY ATTACK BROKE BEFORE THAT SAVAGE DEFIANCE OF THE SMALL BRITISH FORCE.



THE MESSAGE WAS A GENERAL ORDER TO ALL UNITS TO RETREAT.



THAT NIGHT, UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, THE BATTLE-WEARY BARNSHIRES STARTED THE NIGHTMARE JOURNEY TO DUNKIRK. THE LOOPHOLE TO FREEDOM. THEY WERE CONTINUALLY HARASSED BY ENEMY PLANES, AND MORE MEN WERE LOST, INCLUDING THE REDOUBTABLE SERGEANT ROBERTS.



CUT OFF BY ENEMY ARMoured SPEARHEADS, THEY FORCE-MARCHED ACROSS COUNTRY.



GRIMLY, MARKIN STRUGGLED TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE

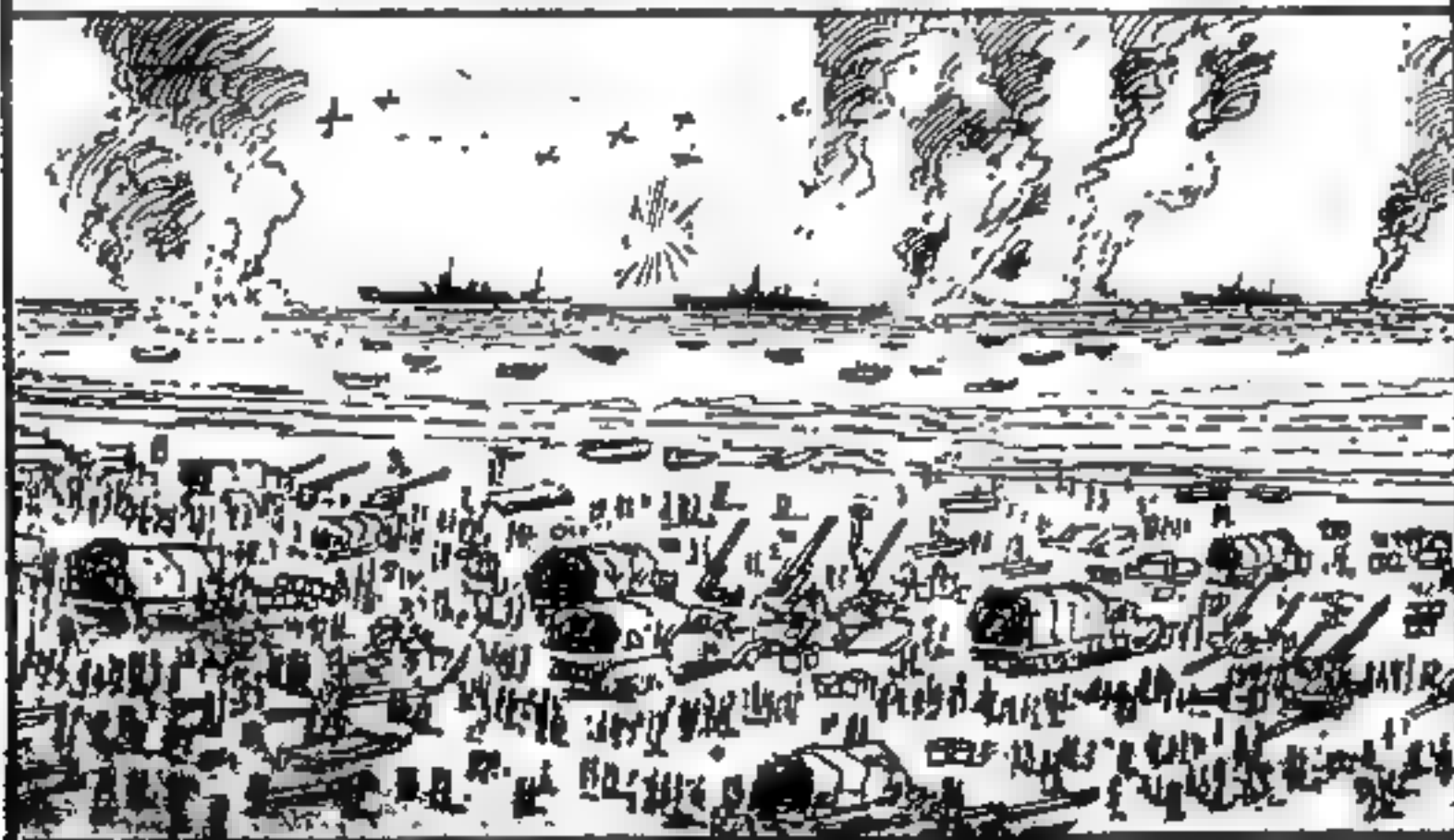


BUCK YOURSELVES UP!  
REMEMBER YOU'RE STILL  
SOLDIERS.

I KNEW IT WAS DAFT  
TO SMASH THOSE TRUCKS!

WE SHOULD SCATTER...  
THIS WAY WE'RE SITTING  
DUCKS!

BUT, AT LAST, THEY REACHED DUNKIRK WHERE A SHATTERED BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY  
FORCE WAITED TO ESCAPE THE CRUSHING MIGHT OF THE GERMAN WAR MACHINE.





## Chapter 3. *Whose Orders?*

THE ESCAPE WAS A NIGHTMARE BUT, TO SECOND LIEUTENANT SAM MARKIN, A GREATER HORROR WAS YET TO COME.

SECOND LIEUTENANT MARKIN,  
YOU ARE UNDER CLOSE ARREST. YOU  
WILL FACE A COURT-MARTIAL ONE  
WEEK FROM TODAY.

BUT... BUT WHAT  
HAVE I DONE?

HE LEARNED THAT HE WAS TO BE CHARGED WITH CULPABLE DERELICTION OF DUTY. NEXT DAY, HIS DULY APPOINTED DEFENDING OFFICER QUESTIONED HIM.

YOU CLAIM THAT YOU  
MERELY OBEYED ORDERS  
IN WITHDRAWING TO THE  
HILL POSITION. WHO ISSUED  
THEM? HAVE YOU ANY  
WITNESSES THAT YOU  
RECEIVED SUCH ORDERS?

SERGEANT ROBERTS WAS  
WITH ME AT THE TIME... BUT  
HE WAS KILLED ON THE WAY TO  
DUNKIRK. BUT SURELY CAPTAIN  
ROSS WOULD KNOW OF THEM!

A GLANCE AT HIS COUNSEL'S SET FACE SHOCKED THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT.

I'M SORRY, LIEUTENANT.  
CAPTAIN ROSS DENIES ALL KNOWLEDGE  
OF ANY SUCH ORDERS. YOUR ONLY DEFENCE  
SEEMS TO BE YOUR OWN  
UNSUPPORTED WORD.

BUT I'M TELLING  
THE TRUTH! WHAT  
OTHER DEFENCE  
CAN I MAKE?

THE FOLLOWING DAY, MARKIN STOOD IN COURT BEFORE A PANEL OF OFFICERS . . .

I SUBMIT TO THE COURT  
THAT LIEUTENANT MARKIN DID  
RECEIVE THE ORDERS HE CLAIMED  
AND ACTED UPON THEM WITH COURAGE  
AND FINE LEADERSHIP EVEN THOUGH  
HE WAS DOUBTFUL ABOUT THE  
WISDOM OF THE INSTRUCTIONS.

SUCH ORDERS WOULD HAVE  
ORIGINATED FROM HIS  
IMMEDIATE COMMANDER.  
CALL CAPTAIN ROSS!

CAPTAIN JOHN ROSS LOOKED ILL AT EASE AS HE GAVE HIS EVIDENCE.



THEN THE PRESIDENT GAVE THE VERDICT . . .





SAM MARKIN COULD ONLY STAND AND STARE AT THE GRIM, CONTEMPTUOUS FACES BEFORE HIM.



JOHN ROSS WAS HIS ONLY COMFORT. THAT NIGHT THE OLDER MAN DID WHAT HE COULD TO EASE THE ANGUISH OF THE YOUNG EX-OFFICER.



LUCK! MARKIN GRITTED HIS TEETH SAVAGELY . . . AND ROSS HASTILY CHANGED THE SUBJECT.



SAM MARKIN KEPT TO HIS WORD. AMONG THE NEW RECRUITS TO THE 5TH, WESTBOROUGH, ONE MAN STOOD OUT FROM THE OTHERS.



PRIVATE SAM MARKIN FOUND THE HARSH LIFE OF THE ARMY RECRUIT VERY DIFFERENT TO WHAT HE HAD BEEN ACCUSTOMED.



SHARP EYES SOON SPOTTED HIS PROFICIENCY BUT HIS PAST PREVENTED HIS PROMOTION.





HIS UNCLE HAD FOLLOWED HIM AND THOUGH NONE OF THE MEN KNEW OF HIS PAST, THE OFFICER IN COMMAND DID.

HE WAS IN COMMAND OF MEN  
ONCE AND MADE A MESS OF THINGS.  
I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T TAKE A  
CHANCE ON HIM AGAIN.

I UNDERSTAND  
SIR.

FAILURE TO WIN A STRIKE ADDED TO MARKIN'S BITTERNESS AND THAT NIGHT, FURTHER FUEL  
WAS HEAPED ON HIS SHOULDERING RESENTMENT.

HEY, YOU  
WHERE DO YOU THINK  
YOU'RE GOING?

IN HERE.  
WHY?

OFFICERS  
ONLY

ONE OF THE MILITARY POLICEMEN POINTED TO THE LARGE SIGN BESIDE THE DOOR.

YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE, SOLDIER!  
IT'S FOR OFFICERS ONLY. YOU'RE  
A NOBODY... A PRIVATE!  
NOW GET MOVING!

**OFFICERS  
ONLY**

SWALLOWING HIS ANGER, MARKIN MOVED ON. FOR A MOMENT, HE HAD FORGOTTEN. MORE THAN EVER, HE FELT HIMSELF TO BE AN OUTCAST.

NO PROMOTION  
AND I CAN GUESS WHY.  
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY  
TO FORGET... AND THAT'S  
IN ACTION!

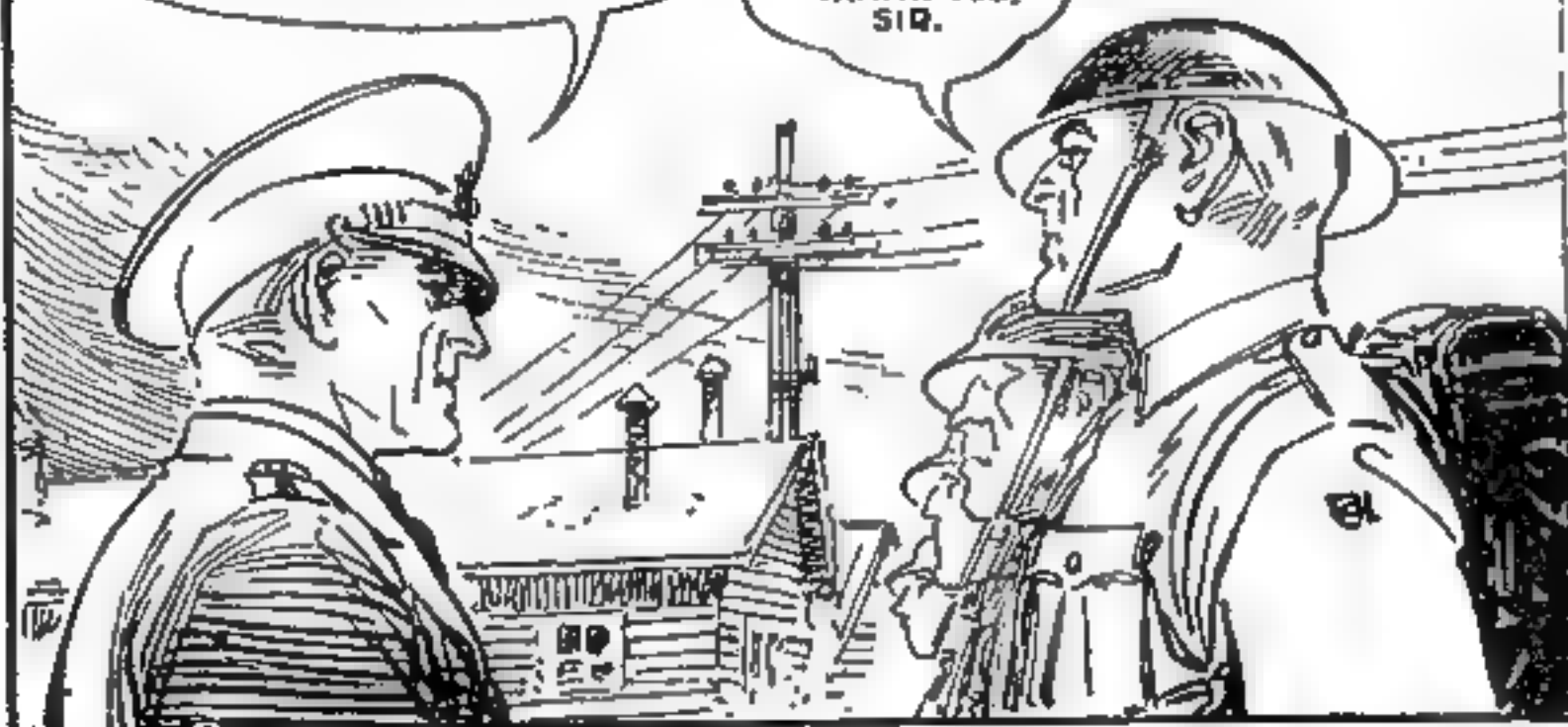
BUT IT WAS SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE HE GOT HIS WISH. THEN THE 5TH WESTBOROUGH'S WERE MOVED TO THE WESTERN DESERT WHERE THE BATTLE FOR NORTH AFRICA WAS BEGINNING TO HOT UP.

**ATTENTION!**

WHEN THE INSPECTING OFFICER REACHED MARKIN, BOTH FELT THE SHOCK OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION. IT WAS CAPTAIN ROSS!

WELL . . . MARKIN!  
GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US.

THANK YOU,  
SIR.



THE TWO MEN RESUMED THEIR OLD FRIENDSHIP ALTHOUGH IT COULD NOT BE QUITE AS CORDIAL AS BEFORE. ROSS RECOMMENDED SAM FOR PROMOTION . . .

D'YOU THINK IT WISE  
TO PROMOTE MARKIN? YOU  
KNOW HIS RECORD.

YES, SIR. BUT  
HE'S A GOOD MAN  
AND WE'LL NEED  
GOOD MEN IN THE  
DAYS AHEAD.



THE MAJOR WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT . . . THEN SHRUGGED . . .

WELL, HE'S IN YOUR  
COMPANY . . . AND YOUR  
PIGEON, I SUPPOSE. LET'S  
HOPE YOU WILL HAVE NO  
CAUSE TO REGRET IT.





STRANGELY ENOUGH, MARKIN WAS PROUD OF THAT STRIPE ON HIS ARM. AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY, HE SOUGHT OUT THE MAN HE KNEW TO BE RESPONSIBLE.

THANK YOU FOR THE PROMOTION, JOHN. I GUESSED YOU HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, SAM. YOU CAN RELY ON ME TO DO ANYTHING I CAN TO HELP.

THE TALK OF PROMOTION LED SAM MARKIN TO WONDER ABOUT HIS FRIEND'S OWN FAILURE TO IMPROVE HIS RANK.

POOR OLD JOHN, STILL ONLY A CAPTAIN. I WONDER WHAT'S KEPT HIM BACK? SHOULD BE A MAJOR BY THIS TIME, AT LEAST.

SUCH THOUGHTS OPENED OLD WOUNDS... AND HIS FACE DARKENED . . .

I SHOULD HAVE HAD THREE PIPS UP BY NOW . . . AS IT IS, I'LL PROBABLY BE LUCKY TO REACH THE RANK OF SERGEANT!

## Chapter 4. *Tough Sergeant*

BUT THE DESERT WAR WAS TO TAKE ITS TOLL OF JUNIOR LEADERS AND SAM MARKIN SOON REACHED THE RANK HE SOUGHT. HIS REGIMENT THE WESTBOROUGHS, BECAME AN ARMoured RECONNAISSANCE UNIT FOR MOBILITY WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THAT SWIFTLY-MOVING CAMPAIGN.



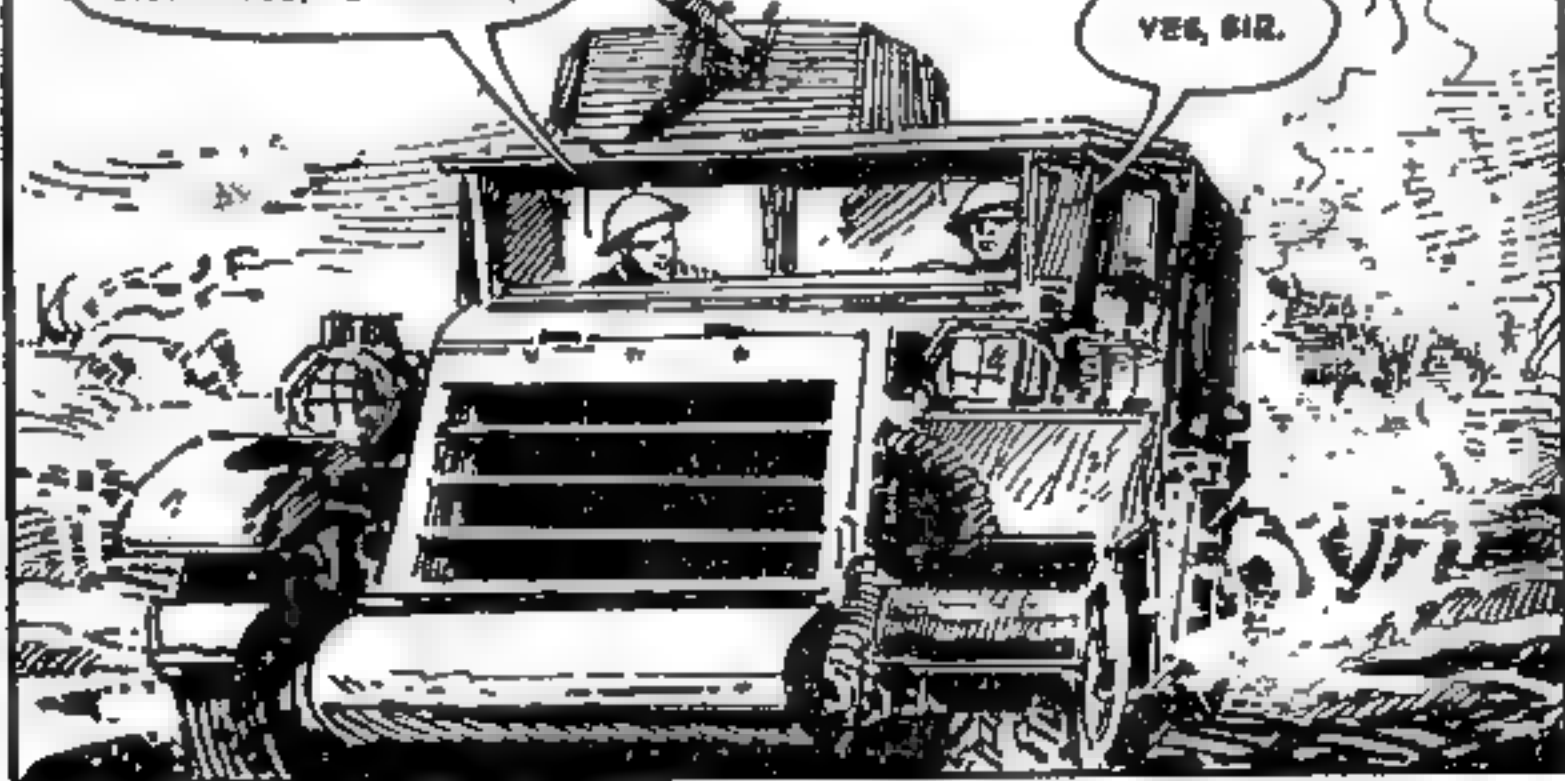
THERE WAS A HINT OF NERVOUSNESS IN YOUNG LIEUTENANT FENSHAW'S VOICE AND SERGEANT MARKIN'S SHAPPED ANSWER DID NOTHING TO DISPEL IT.



FENSHAW TOOK A DEEP BREATH . . . AND, AS HE DROPPED BACK INTO HIS SEAT, HE GAVE THE SERGEANT A WRY LOOK...

YOU LOST YOUR LAST TWO OFFICERS PRETTY SOON, DIDN'T YOU, SERGEANT?

YES, SIR.



STONY-FACED, MARKIN STARED DIRECTLY AHEAD, DISCOURAGING FURTHER CONVERSATION. THE OFFICER GAVE A WEAK LAUGH.

WELL, LET'S HOPE THAT I'M LUCKIER THAN THE OTHERS, EH, SERGEANT?

THAT'S UP TO YOU, SIR.



THEY WERE PROBING DEEP INTO THE DESERT FOR A GERMAN FORMATION REPORTED TO BE BASED ON A WATER-HOLE.



A DISTANT GROUP OF THE ARMoured CAR PATROL WATCHED THE CONFERENCE WITH CYNICAL EYES.





PRIVATE MACKENZIE GLOWERED AT THE ERECT FIGURE OF SERGEANT MARKIN.

SOMEONE OUGHT TO STOP  
'IM BEFORE 'E GETS MORE  
OFFICERS KILLED.

MAC'S RIGHT! MARKIN  
KNOWS THIS GAME INSIDE OUT,  
BUT HE WON'T LIFT A FINGER  
TO HELP THESE NEW OFFICERS.

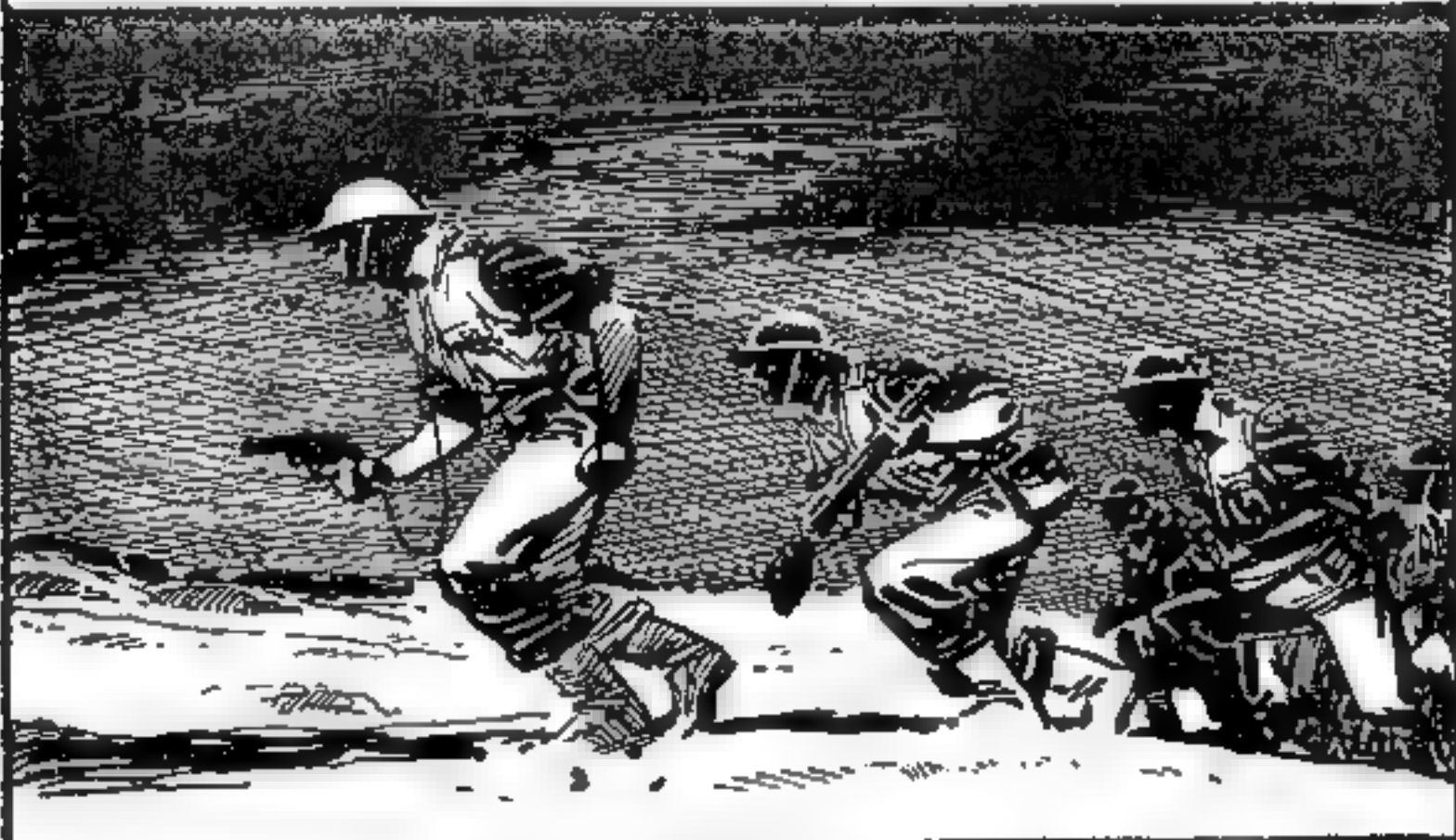


UNAWARE OF THE UNDERCURRENT OF FEELING AGAINST HIM, MARKIN CHECKED THE  
PATROL BEFORE THEY MOVED ON.

I'VE GOT A GOOD TROOP HERE,  
WHY DO THEY SEND OUT YOUNG  
FOOLS TO TAKE COMMAND WHEN  
I KNOW BETTER THAN THEY DO?



THAT NIGHT, WITH THE CARS PARKED IN A NEARBY WADI, A SCOUTING PARTY CREEPT TOWARDS THE GERMAN UNIT. FENSHAW WAS IN THE LEAD.



IT WAS SERGEANT MARKIN WHO STOLE FORWARD TO SILENCE THE FIRST GERMAN SENTRY THEY CAME UPON.



THE SCOUTING PARTY CRAWLED TO THE CREST OF A DUNE. FENSHAW NARROWED HIS EYES AS HE STUDIED WHAT LAY BEYOND.



IT WAS NOT A GOOD PLAN. MACKENZIE, A BATTLE-VETERAN HIMSELF, SHARPED HIS OBJECTIONS AS THEY CREPT BACK TOWARDS THE CARS.



ANGRY WORDS SPILLED FROM MACKENZIE AT THE SERGEANT'S COLD TONES.

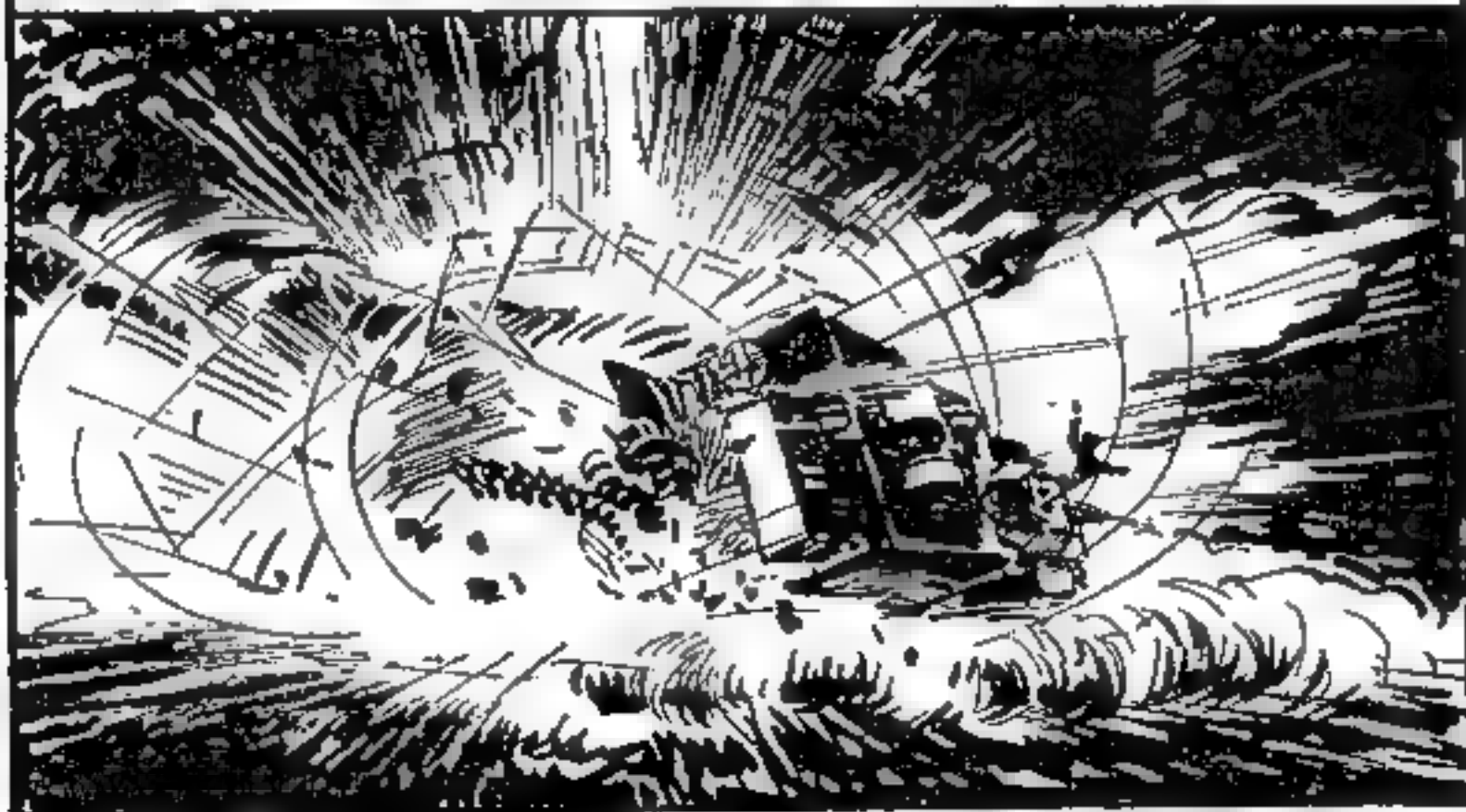


THE FIERCELY WHISPERED ACCUSATION STILL RANG IN MARKIN'S EARS AS HE LED HIS SECTION OF THE PATROL TOWARDS THE OBJECTIVE.

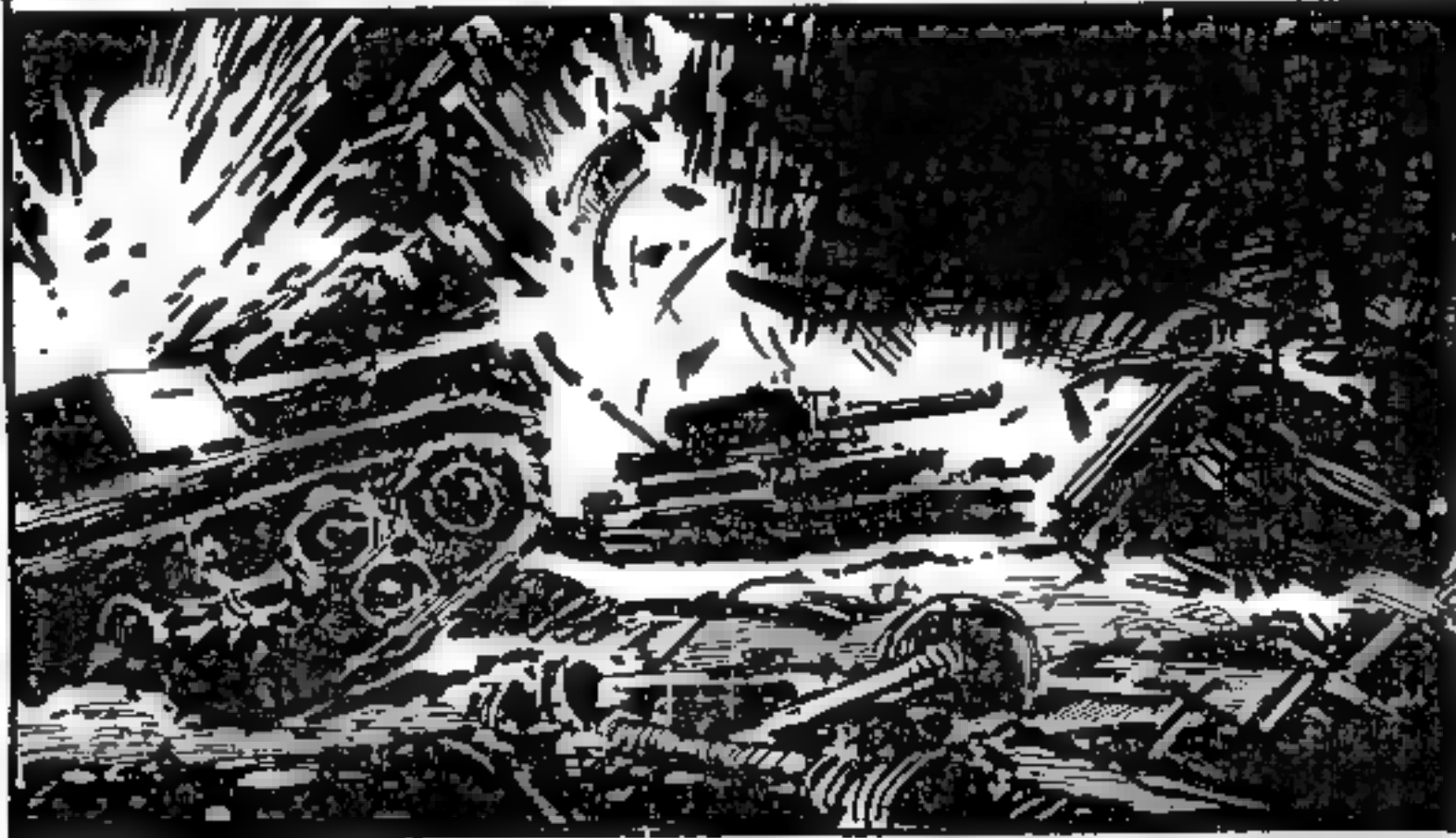




THERE WAS NO LACK OF COURAGE IN THE WAY SECOND LIEUTENANT FENSHAW TOOK HIS CAR INTO THE ATTACK AT FULL SPEED. BUT THE GERMANS WERE WAITING . . . FOR THE ROAR OF THE BRITISH VEHICLES HAD ALERTED THEM.




THE BRAVE YOUNG OFFICER WAS THE FIRST OF MANY CASUALTIES AS ENEMY GUNS RAKED THE ATTACKERS. EVEN SO, THE RAID WAS PRESSED HOME RESOLUTELY.




APPALLED NOW AT THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS LACK OF ADVICE, SAM MARKIN KNEW THEY COULD NOT MAINTAIN THE ASSAULT.

THEY'RE CUTTING US  
TO PIECES! WE'VE GOT TO  
GET OUT OF HERE!



ONCE THE COMMAND WAS IN HIS HANDS, SAM MARKIN BECAME COOLNESS ITSELF AND HIS ORDERS WERE DEFINITE AND ASSURED. THEY DISENGAGED BUT HALF THE TROOP HAD BEEN LOST. LATER

WHAT THE BLAZES  
HAPPENED? CAN YOU  
EXPLAIN WHAT WENT  
WRONG?



THE LIEUTENANT  
WAS IN CHARGE, SIR,  
I SIMPLY FOLLOWED  
ORDERS.

FOR A MOMENT, THE EYES OF THE TWO MEN LOCKED, THEN ROSS SIGHED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD RESRETFULLY

I'VE TRIED TO HELP YOU, SAM,  
BUT YOU'RE LETTING ME DOWN.  
THESE YOUNG SUBALTERNs NEED  
YOUR HELP AND THEY AREN'T  
GETTING IT. THE MEN ARE  
RESTIVE TOO . . .

I CAN GUESS HOW YOU FEEL.  
EVER SINCE YOU GOT THOSE ORDERS  
TELLING YOU TO CHANGE POSITION  
AND ENGAGE THE ENEMY ON SIGHT,  
YOU'VE FELT BITTER, BUT . . .

HE BROKE OFF, FALLING BACK AT THE EXPRESSION FLAMING IN MARKIN'S EYES . . .





CAPTAIN ROSS' FACE WAS SUDDENLY ASHEN AND HE COULD NOT MEET HIS FRIEND'S HORRIFIED, ACCUSING GAZE.

I... I WAS CONFUSED! THE ENEMY WERE ALMOST ON TO US AND I LOST MY HEAD. I... I COULDN'T ADMIT TO THOSE ORDERS... THEY'D HAVE KICKED ME OUT... I...

THE WHINING VOICE FILLED MARKIN WITH DISGUST AND HE BACKED AWAY EVEN THOUGH HE WAS SHAKING WITH RAGE. THEN THERE WAS A SUDDEN INTERRUPTION...

EMERGENCY ORDERS, ROSS. JERRY HAS LAUNCHED A BIG ATTACK. IT'S MOVING THIS WAY FAST. GET READY TO MOVE...

## Chapter 3. The Way Back

SOON THE WHOLE REGIMENT WAS MOVING OUT AND THE STILLNESS OF THE DESERT NIGHT TREMBLED TO THE MUTED THUNDER OF POWERFUL ENGINES.



SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS, THE PANZER DIVISION'S COMMANDED WAS PLANNING THE MANOEUVRE WH CH HE BELIEVED WOULD FOLD UP THE BRITISH ARMY FRONT-LINE DEFENCES.

SHIENK'S GROUP WILL SWING TO THE SOUTH, FELDMAN'S TO THE NORTH WHILE I WILL COMMAND THE CENTRE. WE WILL ATTACK AT FIRST LIGHT.

JAWOHL, HERE GENERAL

THIS TIME WE CANNOT FAIL.



ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE BRITISH FORCES WERE ALSO MOVING INTO POSITION. THRUST WOULD BE MET WITH COUNTER-THRUST.



ACCURATE RECONNAISSANCE WAS VITAL NOW . . . AND NUMEROUS ARMoured-CAR PATROLS SLIPPED OUT INTO THE LONELY DESERT TO FEEL FOR THE ENEMY.



DESPITE THE IMMINENT CLASH OF ARMS, SERGEANT SAM MARKIN'S MIND WAS SEETHING WITH THOUGHTS OF ROSS' GUILTY SECRET

WHEN THE OFFICER VISITED THE OUTFLUNG RECONNAISSANCE UNITS IN THE EARLY HOURS, MARKIN TRIED TO GET HIM TO SIGN A CONFESSION THERE AND THEN.



AS ROSS SCURRIED AWAY TO HIS OWN VEHICLE, THE SERGEANT YELLED ANGRILY AFTER HIM





THE VAST DESERT ARENA WAS ASTIR WITH MOVEMENT . . . BUILDING UP TO THE MOMENT OF ASSAULT. AS DAWN LIGHTENED THE SKY

FEUER!



A TREMENDOUS GERMAN BARRAGE THUNDERED OUT, CRASHING USELESSLY ON BARREN GROUND WHERE THE GERMANS IMAGINED THE BRITISH TO BE. THEN CAME THE COUNTER-ATTACK

DONNERWETTER! THE  
ACCURSED ENGLANDERS  
HAVE TRICKED US! FIRE  
OVER OPEN SIGHTS!



FRANTICALLY, THE GERMAN GUNNERS FOUGHT THEIR GUNS AS THE BRITISH ARMoured SPEARHEAD ROARED TOWARDS THEM. . .



THEN THE TWO FORCES MET IN A CONFUSED CLASH OF STEEL UPON STEEL. ENGINES ROARED, GUNS BARKED SAVAGELY AND MEN DIED IN THE VIOLENCE OF TANK WARFARE.



THE ARMoured RECCE CARS WERE IN THE THICK OF THE MELEE. SAM MARKIN'S VEHICLE SWERVED CLOSE TO A BURNING PANZER.

GUNS HAMMERING,



CAPTAIN ROSS WAS IN TROUBLE. A SHELL HAD WRECKED HIS ARMoured CAR AND NOW HE CROUCHED WITH HIS CREW IN A SHALLOW DIP IN THE SAND.



DESPERATELY, HE TRIED TO HIDE HIS OWN TERROR BUT THE SICKNESS WITHIN HIM GREW AT A SHOUT FROM ONE OF HIS MEN.



THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR MERCY IN THAT BATTLE TO THE DEATH. THE GERMAN TANK COMMANDER INTENDED TO COMPLETE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BRITISH CAR AND ITS CREW AND HIS MACHINE-GUNS RAKED THE LIP OF THEIR MEAGRE COVER.





BUT IN THAT MOMENT OF IMMINENT DEATH, CAPTAIN ROSS FOUND HIS COURAGE DESPITE THE HAIL OF LEAD. HE SPRANG TO HIS FEET AND FLUNG A GRENADE AT THE CATERPILLAR TRACKS OF THE ONCOMING PANZER.



BUT THAT ACT OF VALOUR WAS TO COST ROSS DEARLY. MORTALLY WOUNDED, HE FELL TO THE GROUND . . . JUST AS SAM MARKIN'S CAR RACED TOWARDS THE SCENE.



JINKING AND SWERVING, MARKIN'S DRIVER SKILFULLY DODGED THE EXPLODING SHELLS.



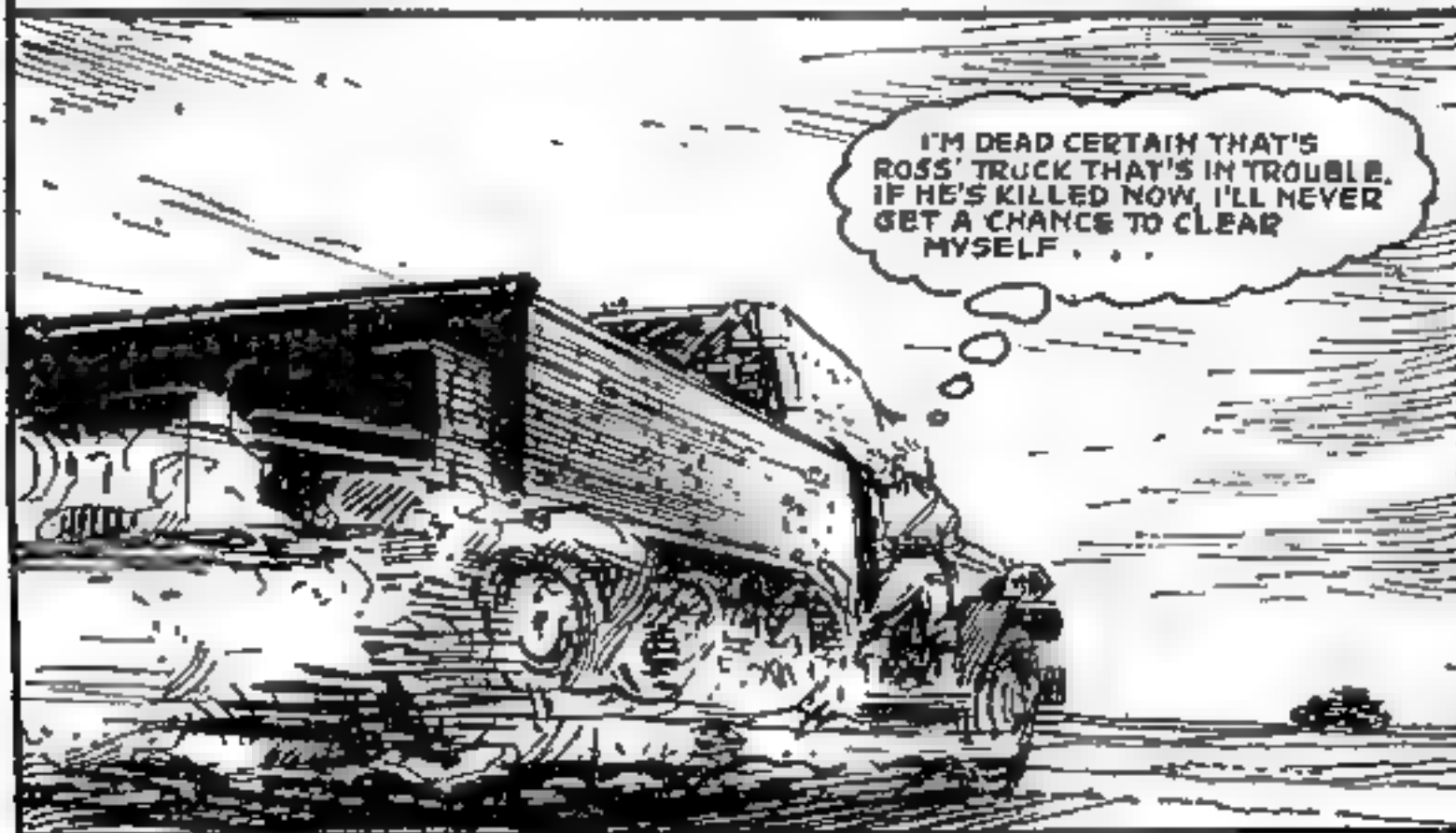
MARKIN RASPED TERSE ORDERS TO HIS DRIVER



SWING ALONGSIDE THE TANK. I'M GOING TO MAKE A JUMP FOR IT.

IT'S CRAZY, SARGE!  
IT'LL NEVER WORK!

MARKIN CLUNG LIKE A LEECH TO THE SIDE OF THE CAR AS IT ROCKED AND BUCKED ACROSS THE SAND AT TOP SPEED.



I'M DEAD CERTAIN THAT'S ROSS' TRUCK THAT'S IN TROUBLE. IF HE'S KILLED NOW, I'LL NEVER GET A CHANCE TO CLEAR MYSELF . . .

LITTLE DID THE SERGEANT KNOW THAT THE SANDS OF ROSS' LIFE WERE ALREADY RUNNING OUT . . .

I'VE GOT TO TIME IT JUST RIGHT! A SECOND TOO SOON OR TOO LATE . . . AND IT'S CURTAINS!

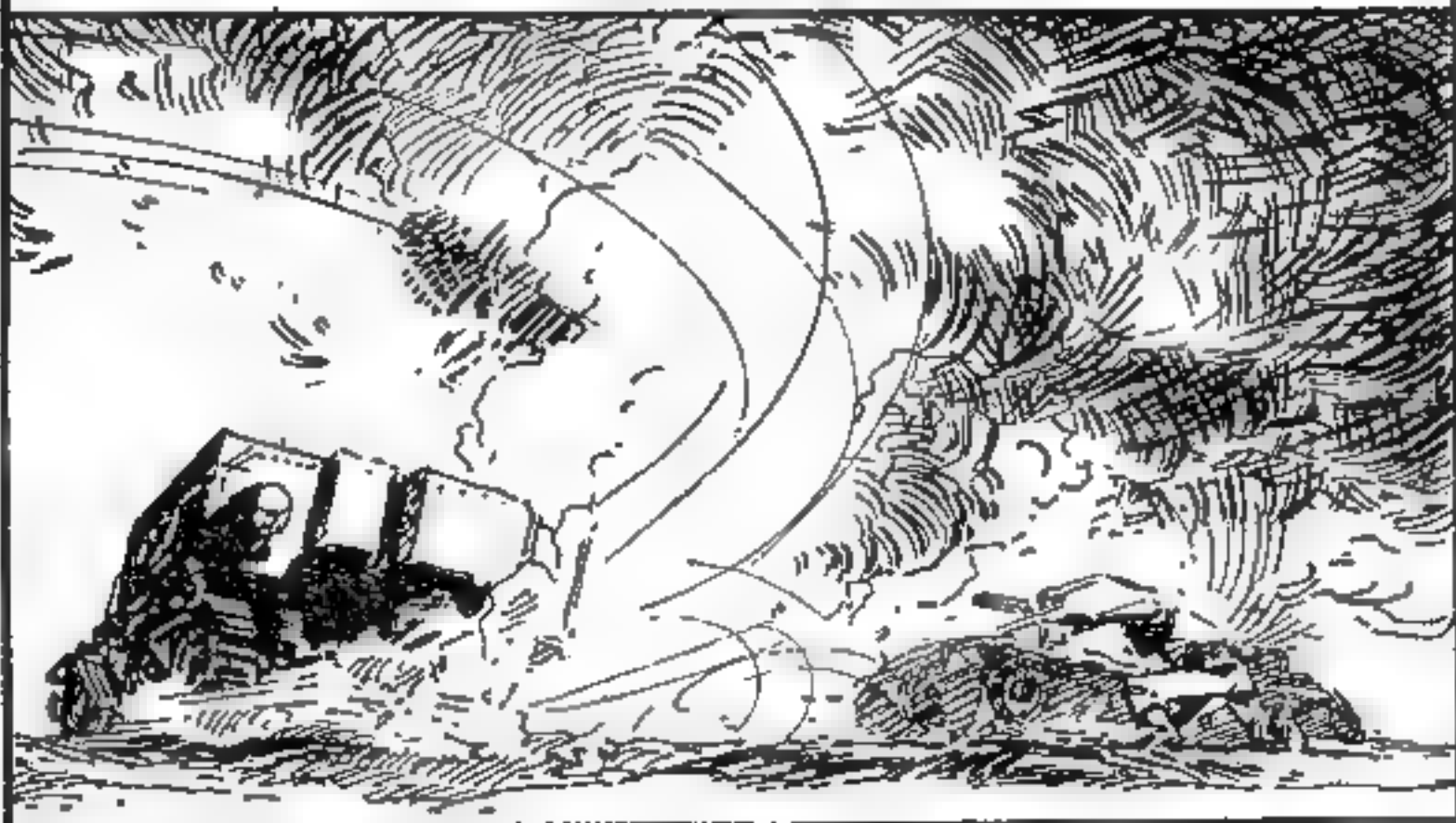
GRIMLY THE GERMANS WATCHED THE BRITISH CAR'S TERRIER-LIKE APPROACH . . .

LET HIM COME INTO POINT-BLANK RANGE, HANS . . . HE CANNOT HURT US WITH HIS PUNY GUN.

THE ARMoured CAR WAS NOW ONLY FIFTY YARDS FROM THE PANZER, BORING IN AS IF IT WOULD RAM ITS POWERFUL OPPONENT, BROADSIDE ON.

READY, SARGE! . . . WE'RE NEARLY THERE!

THE GERMAN GUNNER'S FINGER TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER . . . AND AT THAT CRUCIAL MOMENT, THE BRITISH CAR SWERVED AGAIN. RELEASING HIS HOLD, MARKIN WENT ROLLING TOWARDS THE TANK. . .

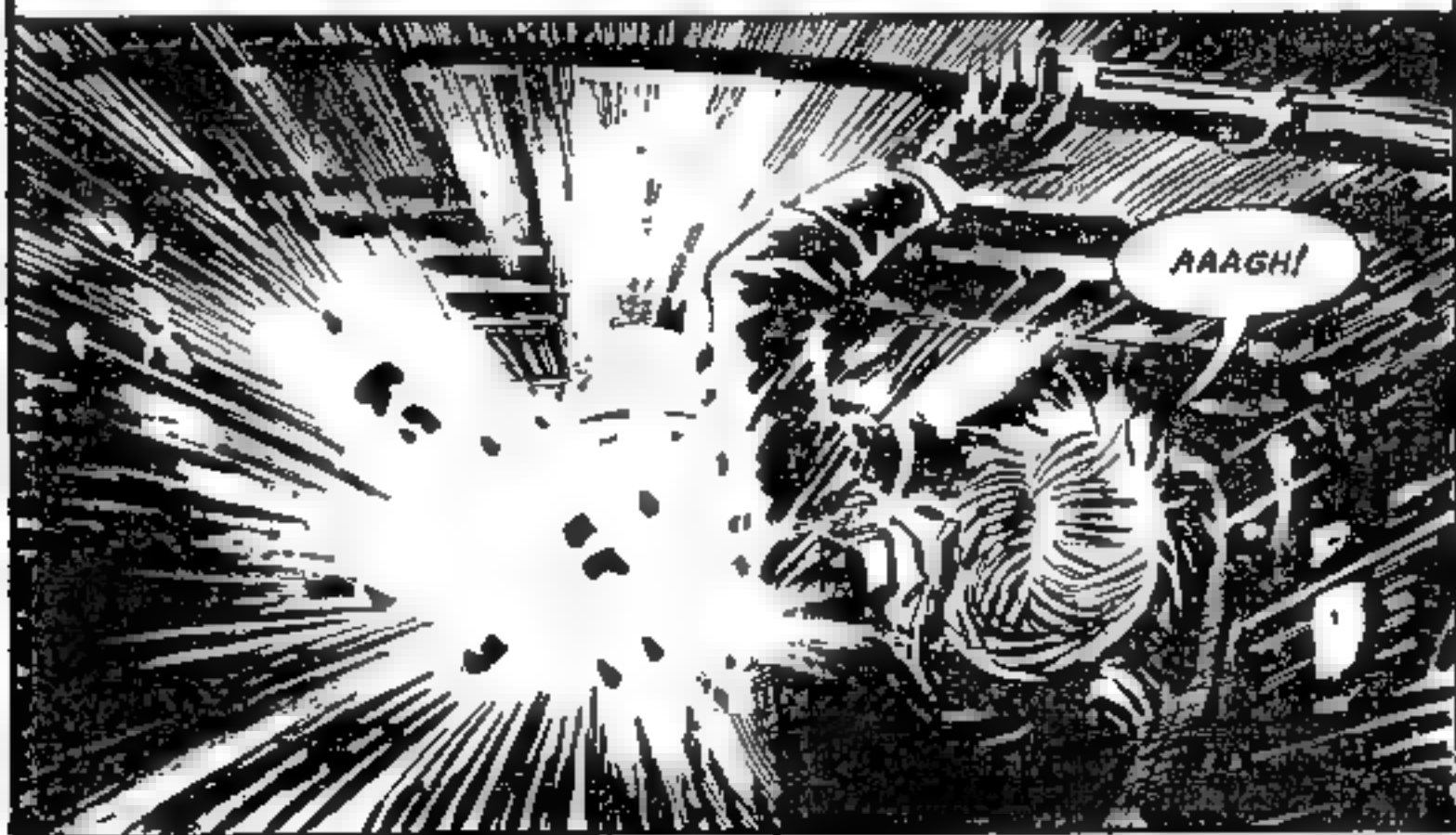


THE SERGEANT HAD BARE SECONDS NOW TO REACH THE TANK BEFORE BEING SPOTTED BY THE CREW. HIS GRIP TIGHTENED ON THE GRENADE . . .

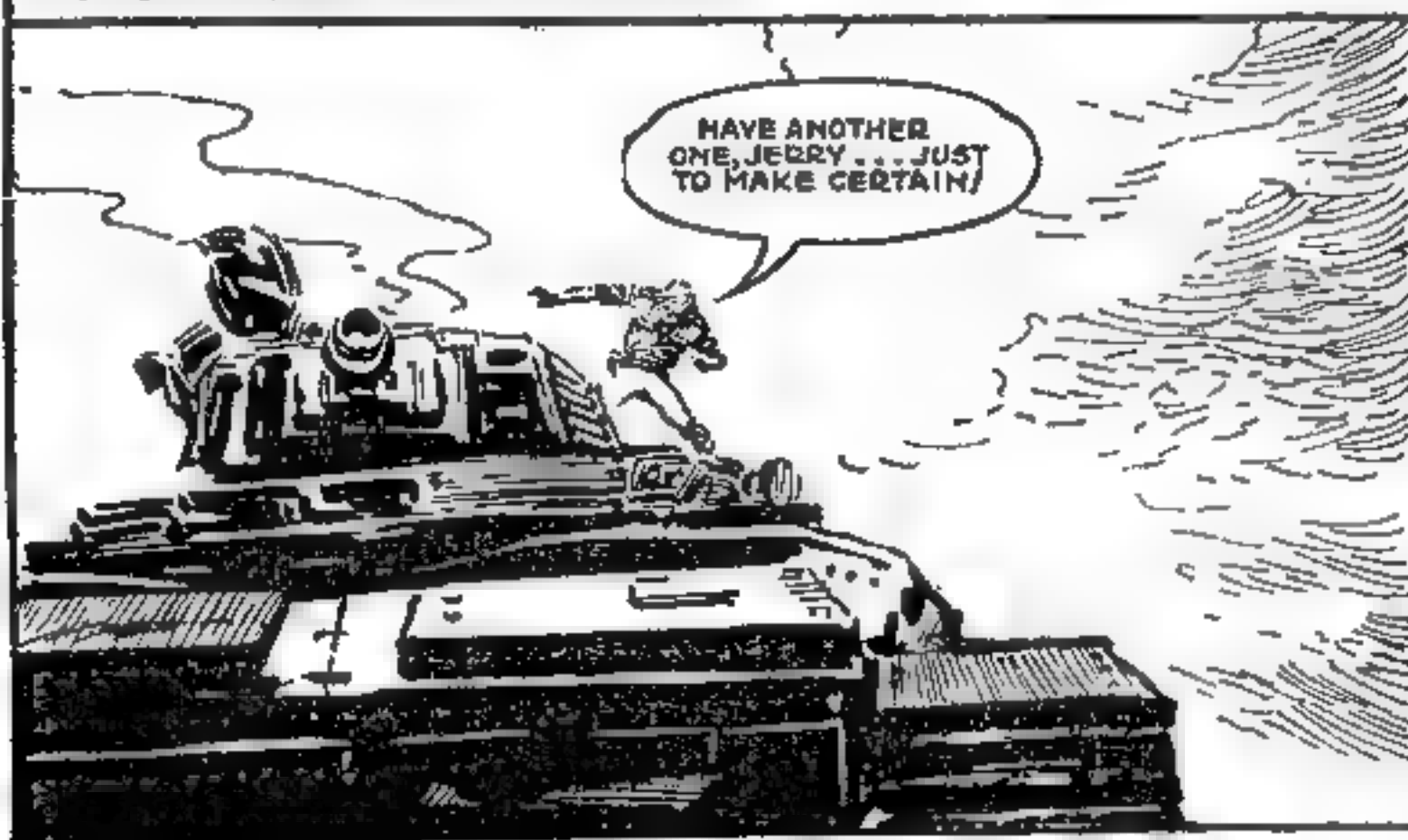




THE PANZER'S NARROW OBSERVATION SLIT LEERED AT HIM AND HE CAUGHT A FLEETING GLIMPSE OF A STARTLED WHITE FACE . . . WHICH WAS BLOTTED OUT IN THE BLINDING FLASH OF THE GRENADE AS IT EXPLODED INSIDE . . .



SMOKE AND FLAME GUSHED FROM THE TURRET AS THE HATCH BURST OPEN. BUT MARKIN HAD RISKED TOO MUCH TO TAKE ANY CHANCES.



CAPTAIN ROSS, HOVERING ON THE BRINK OF DEATH, OPENED WEARY, PAIN-FILLED EYES AS SAM MARKIN CAME TO TOWER OVER HIM.




ROSS SMILED GRATEFULLY AS MARKIN  
TRICKLED WATER BETWEEN HIS LIPS.




THE WEAK VOICE FADED AND MARKIN SLOWLY ROSE TO HIS FEET. A SOLDIER HANDED HIM A SHEET OF PAPER.

HE DICTATED THIS A FEW  
MOMENTS AGO, SARGE.  
SAID IT WAS FOR YOU.

A black and white comic panel showing a soldier in the foreground, wearing a helmet and looking down at a large helmet resting on the ground. In the background, two other soldiers are standing near a tank, one of whom is handing a sheet of paper to the other. The scene is set in a battlefield with smoke in the air.

ROSS HAD DICTATED HIS CONFESSION AFTER BEING HIT BY GERMAN BULLETS. THE STATEMENT, SIGNED BY WITNESSES, WAS ENOUGH TO CLEAR MARKIN COMPLETELY OF THE CHARGES FOR WHICH HE HAD BEEN FOUND GUILTY SO LONG AGO.

WHAT ABOUT THE  
CAPTAIN, SARGE?

A black and white comic panel showing a large tank in the foreground, moving through a battlefield. In the background, three soldiers are standing and talking. The scene is filled with smoke and debris, suggesting a recent battle.

WE'LL SEE THAT HE'S  
TAKEN CARE OF LATER.  
AT THE MOMENT, WE'VE  
GOT A BATTLE TO WIN.



## The Dead Keep Faith

AFTER THE SMOKE OF BATTLE HAD DRIFTED AWAY, THERE WAS TIME TO CORRECT THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST . . .



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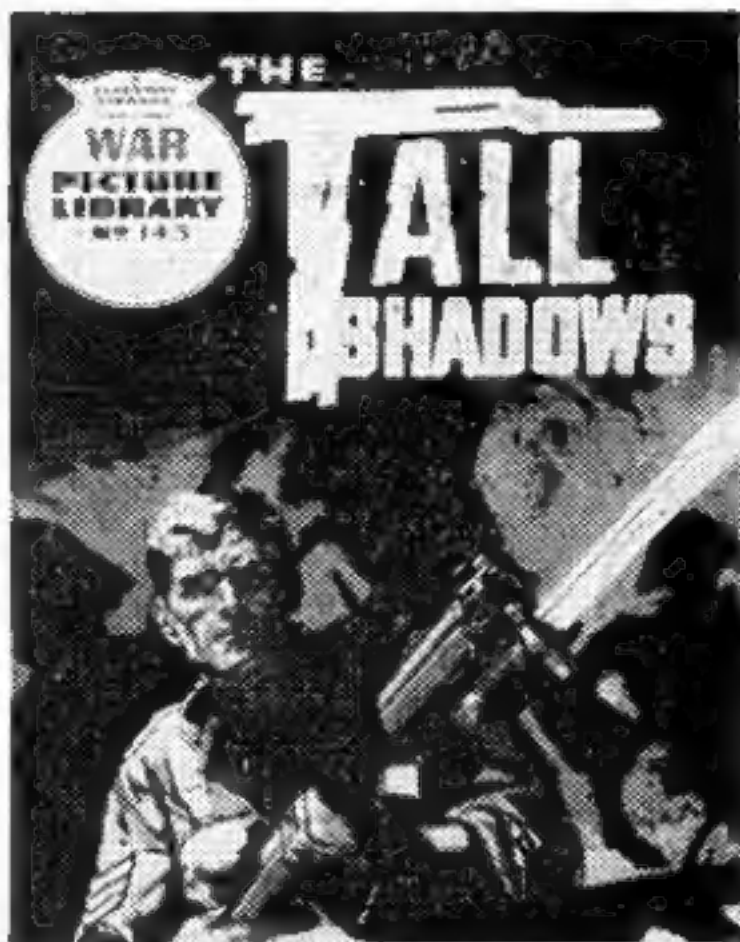
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